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**Advancement of women**

### **Trafficking in women and girls**

#### **Report of the Secretary-General**

##### *Summary*

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 71/167, the present report contains information on successful interventions and strategies, as well as gaps, in addressing the gender dimensions of the problem of trafficking in persons and recommendations on the strengthening of human rights-based and gender- and age-sensitive approaches within comprehensive and balanced efforts to address trafficking in persons.

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\* A/73/150.



## I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 71/167, on trafficking in women and girls, the General Assembly urged Governments to devise, enforce and strengthen effective measures to combat and eliminate all forms of trafficking in women and girls. The Assembly called upon Governments to, *inter alia*, address the factors that increase the vulnerability of women and girls to being trafficked; criminalize all forms of trafficking in persons; strengthen prevention and awareness-raising action; support and protect victims of trafficking; encourage the media and business sectors to cooperate in efforts to eliminate trafficking; and enhance information-sharing and data-collection capacity.

2. The General Assembly also requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its seventy-third session a report that compiled information on successful interventions and strategies, as well as the gaps, in addressing the gender dimensions of the problem of trafficking in persons and provided recommendations on the strengthening of human rights-based, gender- and age-sensitive approaches within comprehensive and balanced efforts to address trafficking in persons. The present report is based on, *inter alia*, information received from Member States, entities of the United Nations system and other organizations. It covers the period since the issuance of the previous report on the subject (A/71/223), from 26 July 2016 to 30 June 2018. It takes into account emerging issues such as the impact of technological advances on the trafficking of women and girls.

## II. Global and regional normative developments

3. Trafficking in persons has been recognized by Member States both as a human rights violation and as a critical issue for development. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development contains specific targets in the Sustainable Development Goals that address trafficking, as a part of the continuum of violence against women and girls, in particular target 5.2 of the Goals, on eliminating all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation, target 8.7, on eradicating forced labour and ending modern slavery and human trafficking, and target 16.2, on ending all abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence.

4. Important features of the 2030 Agenda that are particularly important for eliminating trafficking are the Agenda's being grounded in human rights principles and standards; its universal application to all people in all countries; the commitment to leaving no one behind, including the most vulnerable; and the emphasis on the systematic mainstreaming of a gender perspective in its implementation. As such, in the 2030 Agenda, Member States committed to ensuring that all women and girls, regardless of their location, situation or circumstances, live a life free from violence, including trafficking.

5. In addition to the 2030 Agenda, global norms and standards on the elimination of trafficking have been advanced by several United Nations bodies during the reporting period. The General Assembly held a high-level meeting in September 2017 to appraise progress achieved in the implementation of the United Nations Global Plan of Action to Combat Trafficking in Persons and, by its resolution 72/1, adopted the political declaration on the implementation of the Global Plan of Action, in which Member States reaffirmed their commitment to implementing the Global Plan of Action and the 2030 Agenda, with a particular focus on addressing the complex factors that contribute to the trafficking of women and girls. In line with the

commitment to leave no one behind, Member States reiterated the need for improved collection of data disaggregated by sex, age and other relevant factors.

6. In the agreed conclusions adopted at its sixty-first and sixty-second sessions, the Commission on the Status of Women urged Governments to strengthen anti-trafficking strategies that integrate a human rights and sustainable development perspective and address the demand that fosters all forms of exploitation, including sexual exploitation and forced labour. At its sixty-second session, reflecting the commitment to leave no one behind, the Commission recognized that women and girls in rural and remote areas might be particularly vulnerable to violence.

7. The Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, continued to examine the impact of anti-trafficking measures on the human rights of victims. The Special Rapporteur drew attention to protecting victims of trafficking and people at risk of trafficking in conflict and post-conflict situations, especially women and children (see A/71/303) and to protecting refugees, asylum seekers and migrants (see A/HRC/38/45). In 2017, the Special Rapporteur prepared a joint report with the Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, including child prostitution, child pornography and other child sexual abuse material (A/72/164), in which they studied the vulnerabilities of children to sale, trafficking, and other forms of exploitation in situations of conflict and humanitarian crisis.

8. In 2017, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences, transmitted a report to the General Assembly (A/72/139), in which she assessed how the continued prevalence of contemporary forms of slavery was related to sustainable development, emphasizing gender inequality and inequalities more broadly as key drivers of slavery. In 2018, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, highlighted how technology can be used for trafficking in women and girls and as a threat to compel women into trafficking situations (see A/HRC/38/47). The Special Representative for Children in Armed Conflict also addressed trafficking in her 2016 report to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/34/44).

9. In 2016, the Human Rights Council adopted resolution 32/3 on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, in which it placed a specific focus on conflict and post-conflict situations. In its resolution 33/7, on unaccompanied migrant children and adolescents and human rights, the Council expressed concern about migrant children and adolescents in vulnerable situations, in particular with regard to trafficking and sexual exploitation.

10. In its general recommendation No. 37 (2018) on the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change, adopted at its sixty-ninth session, held from 19 February to 9 March 2018, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women recommended that States parties develop policies and programmes to address existing and new risk factors for gender-based violence against women, human trafficking and forced marriage, recognizing the continuum of violence experienced by women and girls in the context of disaster risk reduction and climate change. At the same session, the Committee decided to elaborate a general recommendation on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration.

11. The links between trafficking, conflict and insecurity were addressed in Security Council resolutions 2331 (2016) and 2388 (2017), in which the Council condemned all acts of trafficking. Recognizing the continuum of violence against women and girls, the Council stressed that acts of human trafficking during armed conflict, as well as sexual and gender-based violence, could be part of the strategic objectives and ideologies of certain terrorist groups. It recommended that Member States investigate, disrupt and dismantle the networks involved, emphasizing international cooperation

in law enforcement. In his report to the Council (S/2017/939), the Secretary-General expressed particular concern about the exploitation of women and girls by terrorist groups, including the armed group Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Boko Haram, in particular where women and girls are forced into marriage and offered as a reward to fighters and associates. The Panel of Experts on Yemen also highlighted the problem of trafficking in their 2017 report (S/2017/81/Corr.1 and S/2018/193).

### III. Current context

#### A. Trafficking as a gendered global challenge

12. Trafficking remains a global challenge; the most reliable estimates available from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) indicate that, between 2012 and 2014, a total of 63,251 victims were detected in over 100 countries.<sup>1</sup> Western and Southern Europe and high-income countries of the Middle East and North America are key destination areas for trafficking. The most significant trafficking flows originate from Eastern Europe, Central Asia, South America and South Asia, whereas flows from sub-Saharan Africa and East Asia are more globally dispersed.<sup>2</sup> The majority of victims are trafficked transnationally (57 per cent), with the remainder trafficked domestically, a share which has increased from 34 per cent in 2010 to 43 per cent in 2014,<sup>3</sup> which is in part reflective of improved data collection efforts in many destination countries.

13. Over the past decade, the profile of victims of trafficking has changed: although most detected victims are still women, children and men are now making up a larger share compared with a decade ago. In 2014, women made up 51 per cent of detected victims of trafficking, compared with 74 per cent in 2004. Men made up 21 per cent of detected victims in 2014, compared with 13 per cent in 2004. The reason for the increasing share of men is attributed to the increasing recognition and detection of different forms of trafficking, including trafficking for forced labour, for which men are more likely to be trafficked. Preliminary data for 2016 indicates that the share of women as detected victims of trafficking remains at similar levels to 2014, whereas there has been a slight increase in the share of girls between 2014 and 2016.<sup>4</sup>

14. In most areas of the world, the information on detected victims shows that trafficking in persons mainly affects women and girls. Preliminary data for the 2014–2016 period indicates that 82 per cent of detected women are trafficked for sexual exploitation, 13 per cent for forced labour and the remainder for other forms of exploitation, such as forced marriages or begging. Some 71 per cent of detected girls are trafficked for sexual exploitation, 22 per cent for forced labour and 7 per cent for other forms of exploitation.<sup>5</sup> In some regions, such as East Asia, women are more likely than men to be victims of forced labour. In that context, women are often trafficked for the purpose of domestic servitude in family households.<sup>6</sup>

15. Trafficking for various types of marriage is emerging as a more prevalent form, as identified by UNODC in its 2016 *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*.

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.16.IV.6).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.18 \_\_\_\_\_).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> See UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons* (2016).

UNODC is currently developing a paper in which it will provide analytical and conceptual context on the issue of trafficking in persons for or with an aspect of marriage. In some regions, this often involves forced marriages, or unions without the consent of the woman or girl. Trafficking for sham marriages mainly takes place in higher income countries.<sup>7</sup> The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) reports a growing trend of women in the Greater Mekong subregion being deceived and/or coerced into marriages to men in the region.<sup>8</sup>

16. The Counter-Trafficking Data Collaborative, launched in 2017 by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in partnership with Polaris Project and Liberty Asia, has identified a number of other differences in victims of trafficking based on gender and age. For example, there is a higher percentage of women in younger age groups, whereas men tend to have a larger share in the over-30 age groups. Almost half of male victims were recruited by an acquaintance, whereas over a quarter of female victims were recruited by an intimate partner, and over a third by a family member or relative. Looking at the means of control, restriction of movement, and psychological and sexual abuse are used as a means of control over female victims of trafficking more than male victims.<sup>9</sup>

## **B. Links between trafficking, gender inequality and the Sustainable Development Goals**

17. Many of the root causes and underlying factors for the trafficking of women and girls are covered in the Sustainable Development Goals. They include gender-specific factors such as: the acceptance and normalization of violence against women and girls, which is addressed in Goals 5, 11 and 16; the vulnerability of women to poverty, addressed in Goal 1; the concentration of women in insecure and vulnerable work and their lack of decent work opportunities, addressed in Goal 8; and the limited access for women and girls to education, addressed in Sustainable Development Goal 4. Broader socioeconomic factors also play a role, such as inequalities within and between countries, which is addressed in Goal 10, and insecurity as a result of conflict, addressed in Goal 16, or as a result of climate change and natural disasters, which is addressed in Goals 12, 13, 14 and 15. As such, the implementation of several Goals is critical to the elimination of trafficking in women and girls.

18. The trafficking of women and girls is a form of violence against women, and as such, responses to trafficking must be connected to the broader targets of the Sustainable Development Goals relating to the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls (Goals 5, 11 and 16). Understanding violence against women and girls, including trafficking, as a continuum is to recognize the commonalities and connections between manifestations of violence in diverse contexts, in particular the gendered norms, assumptions and stereotypes around male domination, sexual entitlement, coercion and control.<sup>10</sup> Dominant norms and stereotypes regarding masculinities create an expectation of men to exert power to control and coerce women, in particular in relation to sex. Furthermore, norms and gender stereotypes around the expectation of submissiveness and gender roles of women also create a

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> United Nations Action for Cooperation against Trafficking in Persons, *Human Trafficking Vulnerabilities in Asia: A Study on Forced Marriage between Cambodia and China*, (Bangkok, UNDP, 2016).

<sup>9</sup> Counter-Trafficking Data Collaborative, "Human trafficking and gender: differences, similarities and trends". Available at [www.ctdatacollaborative.org/story/human-trafficking-and-gender-differences-similarities-and-trends](http://www.ctdatacollaborative.org/story/human-trafficking-and-gender-differences-similarities-and-trends)

<sup>10</sup> Liz Kelly, *Surviving Sexual Violence* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1988).

context conducive to violence against women, including trafficking. Efforts to prevent trafficking must address such norms and gender stereotypes.

19. The vulnerability to trafficking experienced by women and girls is closely connected to their unequal economic and social status, which is addressed in Sustainable Development Goals 1, 4, 5 and 8. Globally, women and girls are overrepresented among the poor: 330 million women and girls live on less than \$1.90 per day, which amounts to 4.4 million more women than men.<sup>11</sup> Women in developing countries remain concentrated in the most vulnerable forms of informal work.<sup>12</sup> Poverty and the inability to gain access to decent work may push women to seek risky economic opportunities where they are at risk of coercion, abuse and trafficking. Efforts to flee situations of violence and abuse also prompt women and girls to take risks that may lead to them being trafficked.

20. Gender disparities in education can also increase the risk of trafficking among women and girls. Although the gender gap in rates of primary and secondary school enrolment have decreased overall, in some regions, girls remain more likely than boys to be out of school. For example, in sub-Saharan Africa, 35.1 per cent of female children, adolescents and youth of primary, lower-secondary and upper-secondary levels of education are out of school, compared with 29.6 per cent of males. A lack of education increases the risk of trafficking among women and girls by limiting their future economic options. Being out of school also increases the risk of trafficking for girls, given that they are often forced or coerced into vulnerable and exploitative forms of work to support themselves or their families.<sup>13</sup> Education plays an important role not only in preventing trafficking by expanding economic opportunities for women and girls, but also in providing an opportunity for educating and raising awareness about trafficking among all pupils.

21. Multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination can make some groups of women more vulnerable to trafficking. As noted in the recent report of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), *Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, evidence has shown that certain groups of women in all parts of the world experience significantly greater socioeconomic disadvantages on the basis of their racial, ethnic, religious, cultural and social identities and prejudices. The commitment to leaving no one behind in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals is therefore particularly important for the elimination of trafficking in women and girls.

22. Broader socioeconomic factors, addressed in the Sustainable Development Goals, can also play a role in the trafficking of women and girls. Progress in reducing inequality within and among countries, addressed in Goal 10, has been mixed, with income inequality increasing in countries with negative growth.<sup>14</sup> Where inequalities are growing, such factors push the poorest, in particular women, to find better economic opportunities in wealthier countries, thus increasing their vulnerability to

<sup>11</sup> UN-Women, *Turning Promises into Action: Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (United States, UN-Women, 2018).

<sup>12</sup> International Labour Organization (ILO), *World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends for Women 2018 — Global snapshot* (Geneva, ILO, 2018).

<sup>13</sup> United Nations Children's Fund, "Reversing the trend: child trafficking in East and Southeast Asia", 2009.

<sup>14</sup> United Nations, *The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2017* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.17.I.7).

trafficking.<sup>15</sup> In addition, global inequalities between countries mean that low-income countries have fewer resources for sustainable development or to invest in services and infrastructure that can help to lift people out of poverty, thus further contributing to the trafficking of women and girls.

23. Conflict and insecurity, addressed in Sustainable Development Goal 16, also increases vulnerability to trafficking among women and girls. Although reliable data disaggregated by sex and age are difficult to collect in the context of a refugee crisis, an estimated 49 per cent of refugees were women and girls in 2016.<sup>16</sup> Women and girls who are forcibly displaced experience a heightened risk of trafficking, as well as other forms of violence against women, and often lack access to adequate health and other services. Migrants in transit are particularly vulnerable to trafficking for various forms of exploitation, including labour exploitation in various sectors, as well as sexual exploitation (see A/HRC/31/35). Climate change and environmental degradation, addressed in Goals 12, 13, 14 and 15, increase the risk of natural disasters and place a strain on livelihoods. In those contexts, economic instability and insecurity increases the risk of trafficking for women and girls, in particular in situations where women and girls become separated from their families, or where families resort to trafficking or collude with traffickers, in their desperation to earn an income.<sup>17</sup>

24. Policy and regulatory contexts can also exacerbate vulnerabilities to trafficking for women and girls. Migration policies and management, addressed in Sustainable Development Goal 10, including the detention of adults and children with irregular migration status, the temporary placement and return of unaccompanied migrant children and the temporary, non-immigrant visas tying migrants to single employers, create vulnerabilities to trafficking, as people pursue risky options in order to migrate. The lack of sufficient accessible, legal pathways for migration, especially for low-skilled employment where migrant women tend to be concentrated, and restrictive immigration schemes by migrant-receiving countries, also increase the risks of trafficking. Although restrictive migration policies are often introduced in an effort to prevent trafficking, the lack of viable options for people to migrate for economic opportunities in fact increases the risk of trafficking. Furthermore, insufficient labour protections can also create a favourable environment for traffickers.

25. The role of prevention in addressing trafficking is vital, and efforts in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals should include measures that adequately respond to the complex causes of trafficking, such as gendered poverty, lack of viable employment opportunities and limited access to education. To achieve those ends, such measures should expand beyond awareness-raising and education to address the root causes, as well as the demand, that leads to the exploitation of women and girls and trafficking.

### **C. Technological advances and the prevention and response to trafficking in women and girls**

26. In recent decades, rapidly expanding technological advances have changed the way the world and people are connected. Access to information and communications

<sup>15</sup> Gergana Danailova-Trainor and Patrick Belser, *Globalization and the illicit market for human trafficking: an empirical analysis of supply and demand* (Geneva, ILO, 2006); Cassandra E. DiRienzo, and Jayoti Das, "Income distribution and human trafficking outflows", *Review of European Studies*, vol. 10, No. 2 (2018).

<sup>16</sup> Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), "Global trends: forced displacement in 2017", (June 2018).

<sup>17</sup> IOM, "The Climate Change-Human Trafficking Nexus" (Bangkok, IOM, 2016).

technology continues to grow worldwide, albeit unevenly and with gender disparities, and new technologies and services are continually emerging, including artificial intelligence, machine learning, big data and blockchain technologies, among many others. although there is limited research available, the emerging literature and practice suggest that these advances present both challenges and opportunities for the prevention of and response to trafficking.

27. Technology today plays a role in facilitating each part of the trafficking chain.<sup>18</sup> For example, technology can play a role in recruiting victims, as social media and Internet sites can be used to identify, groom and coerce potential victims of trafficking. From a gender perspective, traffickers can use sexualized images of women and girls as a tactic of control and coercion. Social media and the Internet are used by traffickers to deceive women and girls into sexual exploitation and sham marriages on the false promise of other forms of work. Offenders may use the Internet to advertise and sell victims, and partnerships and crime syndicates that facilitate trafficking can also be formed with the support of technological advances.<sup>19</sup>

28. The ability to trace activities on the Internet through technological advances can also help authorities to identify and locate potentially vulnerable women and girls who may be victimized and track activities of offenders by following their credit card transactions, GPS location and travel.<sup>20</sup> Technology can also support authorities in the collection and analysis of data, leading to the prosecution of traffickers, and in streamlining communication between anti-trafficking actors. The capacity to reach mass audiences through the Internet and social media creates opportunities for greater awareness-raising to enable communities to help detect trafficking and reach potential victims and survivors of trafficking with information about their rights, services and support.

29. Globally, women and girls are less likely to have access to means of personal identification than men, due to economic and social barriers, placing them at greater risk of trafficking, given that they cannot travel through legal channels or prove their age, nationality or citizenship or immigration status. New technologies such as those facilitating data mining can help to detect and identify women and girls who are trafficked and make it more difficult for trafficking offenders to create fake identities. Digital identity innovations such as technology using a distributed digital ledger, known as a "blockchain", can also play a role in preventing trafficking, identifying victims and helping them to rebuild their lives. Blockchain technology could enable Governments to digitally issue or digitize existing paper identity documents, and such solutions could be used to improve access to and securely store documentation, which would improve access to identity documents for women and girls. Some countries are increasingly utilizing blockchain technology for national identification systems; however, it is important to ensure that such strategies respect privacy laws and ensure data protection.

<sup>18</sup> Sofija Voronova and Anja Radjenovic, "The gender dimension of human trafficking", European Parliament briefing (February 2016).

<sup>19</sup> Danah Boyd and others, "Human Trafficking and Technology: A framework for understanding the role of technology in the commercial sexual exploitation of children in the U.S.", paper prepared for Microsoft Research Connections, 2011.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

#### IV. Actions taken by Member States and the United Nations system

30. The following section outlines the measures taken by Member States<sup>21</sup> and the United Nations system<sup>22</sup> to address trafficking in women and girls during the reporting period, with a focus on addressing gender inequalities, leaving no one behind and the role of technology.

##### A. Enabling environment and accountability

31. Effective prevention of and response to trafficking in women and girls requires a taking a comprehensive approach to the elimination of violence against women and girls, supported by adequate financial resources. The recently launched European Union-United Nations Spotlight Initiative,<sup>23</sup> supported by European Union investments amounting to €500 million, galvanizes such a comprehensive approach and encompasses measures in the areas of laws and policies, prevention, services and data collection to address violence against women and girls, including trafficking. The initiative ensures that women and girls that face intersecting forms of discrimination are at the core of the interventions it supports.

32. States obligations under international law, and the guidelines contained therein with respect to the adoption of anti-trafficking laws and policies, can help States to create an enabling environment for the promotion of anti-trafficking efforts. Furthermore, the degree of adherence of States to relevant treaties is indicative of their commitment to action. In that regard, by 2016, 158 countries had a statute in place that criminalized most forms of trafficking in persons, in line with the United Nations definition.<sup>24</sup> During the reporting period, several countries enacted new laws, or strengthened existing laws, to criminalize trafficking, including the reform of criminal or penal law (Germany, Ireland, Mali, Rwanda and Tunisia). Other legal reforms or decisions have elaborated the obligations and responsibilities with respect to the implementation of national action plans on trafficking (Austria), the assistance and protection of victims of trafficking (Croatia), the regulation and inspection of businesses suspected of trafficking (Republic of Korea), specific forms of trafficking such as for sham marriages (Latvia), sexual exploitation (Lebanon) and restitution orders (Jamaica).

33. States have also reformed laws and regulations in areas that are important for the elimination of trafficking in women and girls and the commitment to leave no one behind, such as migrant labour conditions (Barbados), human mobility (Ecuador), the rights of migrant workers (Indonesia) and the rights of domestic workers (Qatar and United Arab Emirates).

<sup>21</sup> Submissions received from the following 53 Member States: Andorra, Argentina, Austria, Azerbaijan, Barbados, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cabo Verde, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Ecuador, El Salvador, Eswatini, Germany, Greece, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Indonesia, Ireland, Jamaica, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lebanon, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, New Zealand, Nigeria, Peru, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Rwanda, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Switzerland, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of).

<sup>22</sup> Submissions received from the following United Nations entities: IOM, OHCHR, UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF, United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, United Nations trust fund in support of actions to eliminate violence against women, UNODC, UN-Women and World Health Organization (WHO).

<sup>23</sup> See [www.un.org/en/spotlight-initiative/index.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/spotlight-initiative/index.shtml).

<sup>24</sup> See UNODC, *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons* (2016).

34. Where anti-trafficking laws and measures do exist, low conviction rates create a culture of impunity, which acts as an enabling factor for trafficking offenders. Rates of investigations, prosecutions and convictions remain very low, with a high rate of attrition throughout the criminal justice process. An average of only 26 per cent of investigated cases ended with first-instance court convictions in the period 2012–2014.<sup>25</sup> A UNODC analysis shows that conviction rates are likely to increase, the longer that laws are in place, and the poor outcomes throughout the criminal justice process indicate that more effort is needed to strengthen the capacity of law enforcement and justice institutions and increase access for women to justice.

35. To address these factors, building the capacity of the justice system to effectively and sensitively respond to the needs of victims of trafficking, including through the development of new training modules and protocols, has been the main focus of Member States for increasing access to justice for survivors of trafficking (Austria, El Salvador and Kyrgyzstan). In many cases, training for law enforcement agencies has been developed and delivered in collaboration with civil society partners with specialist expertise in addressing trafficking from a gender perspective.

36. Recognizing the need for more concerted and long-term action, countries have also continued to develop and revise multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder national action plans to set out priorities, responsibilities, time frames and monitoring frameworks in ways that address the gendered nature of trafficking (Cambodia, Cabo Verde, Saudi Arabia, Senegal and Switzerland). Multi-stakeholder approaches improve outcomes for victims of trafficking by strengthening referral pathways and improving their access to the services they need. Some countries have also addressed trafficking through strategies to end all forms of violence against women and girls, where trafficking is seen as being on a continuum with other forms and manifestations of such violence (Cambodia and Greece). To strengthen internal accountability for implementing such plans, countries have established interministerial taskforces, committees and commissions with mandates to oversee action plans on trafficking and regularly report on outcomes (Austria, Cambodia, Denmark, Haiti, Honduras, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Nigeria, Peru and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)).

37. The United Nations system has supported the work of Member States in developing laws and improving law enforcement and criminal justice responses. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), UNODC and UN-Women have contributed to legal reform processes in a number of countries aimed at introducing or strengthening laws to address trafficking, have provided capacity-building to the justice sector aimed at improving access to justice for survivors and have trained prosecutors on matters relating to trafficking. A joint initiative of the European Union, IOM, UNICEF and UNODC across 13 countries has focused on understanding children's experiences of the criminal justice system in relation to trafficking cases. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations is providing anti-trafficking capacity-building to law enforcement in Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Libya, Mali and Somalia (see S/2017/939). At the regional level, UN-Women, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and IOM coordinated the advocacy efforts leading to the adoption of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) declaration on the protection and promotion of the rights of migrant workers.

38. The United Nations system continues to coordinate interventions to prevent and combat trafficking in persons and to protect and support victims of trafficking, in particular through the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons, which published a policy brief on the gender dimensions of trafficking in

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

2017, and, in its first principals-level meeting in May 2018, took steps to ensure a system-wide survivor-centred response to ending human trafficking, including its links to migrant flows and forced labour. At the regional level, UNDP manages the United Nations Action for Cooperation against Trafficking in Persons project, which facilitates a coordinated and collaborative effort against human trafficking in the Greater Mekong subregion.

## **B. Addressing root causes, including through technology**

39. Although the majority of actions are focused on the criminal justice response to trafficking, or on providing protection and support services to victims, there has been increasing recognition that more efforts are needed in the prevention of trafficking. Prevention strategies are still very much limited to education, training and outreach programmes focused on improving knowledge and raising awareness of trafficking.

40. Raising awareness of trafficking through public information and the media can increase knowledge about the risk factors for trafficking and the contexts in which it may occur. Families and communities in particular can play a key role in prevention by understanding and responding to risk factors and identifying potential victims. Countries have held workshops, disseminated public information through print and web media, including through creative approaches such as theatre and national days of recognition, to build understanding about trafficking (Argentina, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Eswatini, Greece, Haiti, Jamaica, Latvia, Lithuania, Peru, Romania and Sierra Leone). Some countries have targeted specific groups as part of their campaigns and outreach efforts, including migrant workers (Austria), high-risk communities (Colombia), young people (Hungary) and the most disadvantaged communities (Mauritania), in order to contribute to leaving no one behind in the prevention of trafficking. Efforts of Cameroon to raise awareness have focused on families, in recognition of the fact that families can often play a role in facilitating trafficking.

41. United Nations entities and regional organizations have also implemented prevention and awareness-raising initiatives. UNODC has continued to expand global awareness through the Blue Heart Campaign against Human Trafficking, recently focusing on the aviation and hospitality sectors. UN-Women has focused on preventing trafficking as a form of violence against women and girls by focusing on gender inequality as a root cause of trafficking, in its prevention programming. The Council of Europe, through its Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, has published several reports on trafficking that have attracted media coverage and thus increased awareness of trafficking. The Spotlight Initiative supports the "Safe and fair" programme to prevent trafficking, which aims at empowering migrant women and ensuring safe and fair labour migration for women in the ASEAN region, including through the use of innovative technologies to disseminate information that can protect them from violence, abuse and exploitation, and improving their access to services.

42. The engagement with and regulation of the private sector, in particular with respect to labour standards, is essential for the elimination of labour exploitation and trafficking. Some countries have strengthened labour inspection procedures (Cambodia), improved government procurement policies to ensure compliance with labour standards (Canada), strengthened systems to ensure compliance with labour standards (New Zealand), introduced business transparency measures (United Kingdom), and focused on specific industries vulnerable to the use of forced labour (Denmark). IOM has produced guidelines regarding exploitation associated with supply chains.

43. Utilizing technology for prevention, including the use of technology to track and trace the activities of traffickers so as to detect potential victims of trafficking, is an emerging area. Canada, through its Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Centre, has identified indicators that can be used to assess financial transaction data to detect trafficking. Liechtenstein is using technology to analyse data and disrupt the financial flows associated with trafficking. Denmark is using digital platforms to conduct trials of new methods of identifying victims of trafficking.

44. Although efforts to address the root causes of trafficking remain limited overall, some developed countries have identified the need to improve socioeconomic conditions in countries of origin as a priority for eliminating trafficking through development cooperation, in particular in the areas of access to decent work and gender equality and the empowerment of women (Austria, Germany and United Kingdom). Very few countries have integrated their efforts to prevent trafficking within the broader aims of the Sustainable Development Goals of economic, social and environmental sustainable development, which are critical for addressing the factors that can contribute to creating a context conducive to the trafficking of women and girls.

### **C. Provision of services, with a focus on long-term recovery and prevention of revictimization**

45. Women and girls who are victims of trafficking need various services to help them to recover from their abusive experience, ensure that they are not again exposed to violence and reintegrate back into their families in their home country or in a new country. Indeed, providing survivors with comprehensive and high-quality survivor-centered services is a key pillar of a human rights-based approach. In the short-term, survivors need medical, psychological, legal, immigration, social-protection and financial assistance and access to witness protection and shelters.

46. In the long-term, survivors need education and training, job placement, accommodation, health care, social support and reunification with their families and communities, where it is a safe option. It may not be appropriate in cases in which the family was involved in facilitating the trafficking or where the survivor may be at risk of revictimization in the home country. Almost half of identified cases of child trafficking began with a family member's involvement.<sup>26</sup> Survivors should be able to choose whether or not to return home, with due consideration given to their personal circumstances and safety, and viable immigration options and support should be made available to them.

47. Nearly all countries are providing some level of support to victims of trafficking. The more comprehensive approaches reported included a package of free services including accommodation, food, medical services, psychological support, legal aid and representation and translation services (Argentina, Canada, Costa Rica, Denmark, Hungary, Latvia and New Zealand). In many cases, services are provided by, or in collaboration with, civil society organizations with expertise in supporting victims of trafficking in a gender-sensitive manner. Very few countries were able to provide data on the number of women who had benefitted from their services or the long-term social, economic and health outcomes for survivors of trafficking.

48. Victims of trafficking are often deterred from seeking support by the difficulty in navigating the complex systems and processes that are in place. Recognizing the need for a simplified support structure, some countries have introduced a centralized

<sup>26</sup> United Nations Action for Cooperation against Trafficking in Persons, *Human Trafficking Vulnerabilities in Asia*.

information and referral service, including through national telephone help lines (Canada, Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Peru and Tunisia). Taking advantage of technology to improve the reporting of trafficking, Indonesia has launched a smartphone application that provides information to Indonesian citizens who are planning to travel overseas or who are currently living abroad, including migrant workers. Some countries have also introduced measures to strengthen the quality of services, for example through introducing minimum standards for counselling (Cambodia) or standards for social services (Mali).

49. In line with the commitment to leave no one behind, Greece has support services that are targeted to specific migrant communities where trafficking has been detected, and Croatia has embedded the provision of support to victims of trafficking within social welfare services at the county level in order to increase their reach at the subnational level.

50. Increasing awareness among services providers is important for detecting those at risk of trafficking and providing a supportive response to those that have been trafficked. Countries have included training on the detection and response to trafficking for police officers, teachers, health service providers, labour inspectors and probation officers (Brunei Darussalam, El Salvador, Kenya, Mexico, Republic of Korea, Sierra Leone and Turkey). In addition, there is an increased recognition of the need to train transport providers to be able to detect victims of trafficking and traffickers. In that respect, the International Civil Aviation Organization and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) have produced new guidelines for training cabin crews on the identification of and response to trafficking in persons.

51. In addition to short-term measures, long-term measures help survivors to fully recover and reintegrate into their communities and reduce their chances of revictimization.<sup>27</sup> Whereas, until now, countries have focused primarily on the provision of short-term services, some countries are increasingly providing long-term care and support for reintegration. Denmark supports voluntary return and reintegration, including six months of assistance after a survivor's return to his or her home country. Latvia supports survivors of trafficking with a holistic social rehabilitation programme, including support for education, training and finding gainful employment.

52. A major challenge is that support services and visas (temporary and permanent) for survivors are often conditional, based on their cooperation with the criminal justice system. They are therefore often focused on short-term needs rather than long-term support, and survivors who choose not to go through the criminal justice process are denied support services to help them to recover. Temporary visas often restrict the ability of survivors of trafficking to work, which is essential for their recovery and reintegration and for reducing the risk of revictimization. The Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, has reiterated that assistance to victims of trafficking should be non-conditional and not based upon their willingness to cooperate with law enforcement or to participate in trials as witnesses.

53. A further challenge is the linking of service provision for survivors of trafficking to migration status. In some countries, the conditions of temporary visas may prevent survivors from gaining access to essential services that they need for their recovery. Even where victims of trafficking have the right to receive temporary residence and work permits, which allows them to gain access to services, the processes for

<sup>27</sup> Denise Brennan and Sine Plambeck, "Editorial: moving forward — life after trafficking", *Anti-Trafficking Review*, No. 10 (2018).

obtaining permits are often lengthy and difficult to navigate, which impedes their gaining access to services.<sup>28</sup>

54. Several countries reported that they had made changes to the duration of the reflection and recovery period, ranging from 30 to 90 days, in which survivors of trafficking can gain access support while they make a decision regarding their cooperation with criminal investigation processes (Andorra, Denmark, Latvia and New Zealand). The immigration status of survivors of trafficking also varies across countries, with examples of good practices, such as the granting of temporary or permanent residence that is not contingent upon participation in processes of the criminal justice system (Canada and Denmark), or the establishment of a specific visa category for victims of trafficking (New Zealand).

55. The United Nations system also contributes to the care of victims of trafficking by supporting the provision of services. For example, UNICEF has supported the provision of shelter, information and support services for women and children who are victims of trafficking. Responding to the vulnerability of women and children to trafficking owing to a lack of identification, UNICEF has focused efforts on increasing birth registration among migrant and refugee populations in the Horn of Africa, West Africa and South-East Asia. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations and UNODC are developing a module on human trafficking for a training programme for police personnel.

56. UNHCR has embedded strategies for responding to victims of trafficking within asylum seeking processes, such as in interviews and the application process. UN-Women supports victims of trafficking in several countries, including by providing access to legal information and supporting vocational skills training. It also builds the capacity of national authorities and service providers by providing guidelines on standards for service provision to survivors of trafficking. IOM has provided direct assistance to victims of trafficking, children in particular, deploying specialized multidisciplinary assistance teams to reduce traffickers' exploitation of vulnerability, while supporting positive coping strategies for victims. The United Nations voluntary trust funds on contemporary forms of slavery and for victims of trafficking in persons provide direct assistance to victims of trafficking, including through grants and capacity development projects. The United Nations trust fund in support of actions to eliminate violence against women has supported the provision of support services to victims of trafficking, with a focus on members of marginalized groups.

#### **D. Data and research**

57. Understanding the full nature, extent and impact of trafficking requires the timely collection of high-quality, disaggregated data, which can inform the design and implementation of effective policies and programmes to address trafficking. Monitoring the impact of laws and policies and the evaluation of programmes and long-term outcomes for survivors are important for increasing knowledge of the most effective strategies for preventing and responding to trafficking.

58. Member States are focusing efforts on improving data on trafficking. Some countries have introduced annual reports on trafficking in order to provide information on the number and nature of trafficking cases and monitor trends over time (Canada, Chile, Jamaica, Kenya, Lithuania and Ukraine). There is a growing trend of appointing national rapporteurs who are responsible for reporting and monitoring the situation regarding trafficking (Jamaica and Lithuania). Only one

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

country (Lithuania) reported on efforts to evaluate anti-trafficking programmes, highlighting monitoring and evaluation as an area requiring strengthening across all countries.

59. The efforts of international organizations such as UNODC, ILO and IOM notwithstanding, and the opportunity in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals for improving measurement and monitoring trends,<sup>29</sup> the compilation of reliable data remains a challenge. On the one hand, measuring the total volume of trafficking in persons must account for the coexistence of its three defining elements: the act, the means and the purpose. On the other hand, victims of human trafficking should include both detected and undetected victims. The number of detected victims, as a result of investigation and prosecution activities of criminal justice system, is counted and reported by national law enforcement authorities. Methodology for estimating the number of undetected victims is still under development. Some methods have been identified, as highlighted in the recent report of the National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings and Sexual Violence Against Children of the Netherlands and UNODC,<sup>30</sup> but further testing is needed to produce and come to a consensus on a consolidated approach. The method for estimating undetected victims must allow for the estimation of victim characteristics (sex and age) and the forms of exploitation suffered.

60. United Nations entities have strengthened the knowledge base on trafficking through the collection of data and research undertaken to better understand and improve responses to trafficking, which includes supporting research on the effectiveness of responses to trafficking (United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute), developing methodologies and indicators to improve the protection of child victims of trafficking (UNICEF), conducting research on the links between trafficking and terrorism (Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate) and producing regular data to understand trends in the profiles of victims of trafficking (IOM and UNODC), understand recurring evidential issues in the prosecution of trafficking cases (UNODC), map and analyse the gaps in addressing the gender dimensions of trafficking (UN-Women) and support the development of accessible and easily employable tools that practitioners can use to put sectoral learning to work and improve their counter-trafficking programmes (Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons). WHO is compiling evidence on the role that health services can play in both detecting victims and supporting their health needs. OHCHR also monitors the jurisprudence of human rights mechanisms.

## V. Conclusions and recommendations

### A. Conclusions

61. Trafficking in persons is a crime and a human rights violation that remains deeply gendered in its manifestation and impact. Trafficking in women and girls is addressed in the 2030 Agenda as a form of violence against women and girls that must be eliminated in order to achieve sustainable development that leaves no one behind

<sup>29</sup> See indicator 16.2.2 (Number of victims of human trafficking per 100,000 population, by sex, age and form of exploitation) of the Sustainable Development Goals.

<sup>30</sup> National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings and Sexual Violence Against Children of the Netherlands and UNODC, "Monitoring target 16.2 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: a multiple systems estimation of the numbers of presumed human trafficking victims in the Netherlands in 2010–2015, by year, age, gender, form of exploitation and nationality", research brief (September 2017).

and must be pursued in a comprehensive and integrated manner across several Sustainable Development Goals and targets.

62. States continued to adopt or strengthen laws and policies on preventing and responding to trafficking in women and girls, often with measures targeted to women and girls from marginalized groups. In some cases, such laws were aligned with other relevant legislation including labour and immigration laws. That progress notwithstanding, enforcement of legislation remains weak and investigation, prosecution and conviction rates remain very low.

63. Although the number of programmes in place for tackling trafficking is growing, it is not always evident how many of these programmes reflect a gender equality perspective and a human rights-based approach. Little information was provided on the monitoring and evaluation of programmes to understand their impact and which approaches are most effective in preventing and responding to trafficking, specifically trafficking in women and girls. Given that efforts to prevent trafficking mainly focus on awareness-raising and information-sharing, more emphasis is needed on tackling the root causes of trafficking and on preventing trafficking as an integral part of countries' broader implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

64. While States have increasingly recognized the need to support survivors of trafficking, most responses to trafficking in women and girls still focus on the delivery of short-term services that are often contingent upon victims' cooperation with processes of the criminal justice system. Efforts to ensure the long-term reintegration and support of survivors are still limited.

65. States reported information on several initiatives aimed at improving data on trafficking, yet efforts must focus more on collecting information on undetected victims and on improving the quality and availability of such data, including for women and girls from marginalized groups, through the development of internationally agreed standards and methodologies.

66. Rapid technological change is shifting the landscape of prevention of and responses to trafficking. More research is required to understand the potential benefits and drawbacks of technology in relation to trafficking, so as to help to inform technological development and ensure that technological responses to trafficking respect data protection, privacy and ethical standards.

## **B. Recommendations**

67. Achieving gender equality, the empowerment of all women and girls and the realization of their human rights must be at the core of all international policy commitments, as the cornerstone for addressing all forms of violence against women and girls, including trafficking.

68. States should ensure that measures for the prevention of and in response to trafficking fully and explicitly address the gendered nature of the crime. They should, in particular, address the specific needs of women and girls, who are the primary victims of sexual exploitation, forced marriage and domestic servitude. Responses should also address discrimination on the basis of gender and gender inequality as root causes of trafficking. In order to leave no one behind, measures must respond to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination that increase the vulnerability of the most marginalized groups of women and girls.

69. States should ensure that specific laws that criminalize all forms of trafficking in persons, especially women and girls, are in place in accordance with the standards set by the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols thereto. Those laws must be fully

implemented and enforced, to ensure that all victims of trafficking have access to justice, that perpetrators are prosecuted and held accountable for all their crimes and that criminal proceeds are seized or confiscated.

70. States should ensure coherence between the laws on and measures responding to migration, labour and trafficking. Such laws and measures should be based on human rights principles and must be gender-sensitive, to ensure that the human rights of migrant women and girls, including migrant women workers, are protected throughout the migration and employment process and to provide effective protection against trafficking. Efforts to prevent trafficking should not result in more restrictive migration policies, which would render women and girls more vulnerable to trafficking. States should ensure that workplaces are regulated so that labour standards adhere to international standards and should introduce measures to monitor compliance, with attention to potential victims of trafficking.

71. States should adopt prevention measures beyond awareness-raising, to address the root causes that make women and girls vulnerable to trafficking and to reduce demand for trafficking. Those efforts must aim at addressing, inter alia, violence against women and the culture of tolerance towards such violence, the vulnerability of women and girls to poverty, access for women to decent work and access for women and girls to education. Such efforts to prevent trafficking should be embedded in States' broader implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

72. States should ensure that victims of trafficking receive comprehensive and long-term protection and support, including high-quality services, to enable them to reintegrate into society and lead fulfilling lives with dignity and respect. Long-term reintegration and rehabilitation support should not be contingent upon their cooperation in the judicial process or their immigration status. It should include, at a minimum, support income-generating activities, training, financial compensation and psychosocial rehabilitation. States should grant legal residency status during the period of rehabilitation and ensure return and reunification, only if in accordance with the survivor's choice and best interests and when long-term rehabilitation and integration support are available. Survivors who do not wish to return to their countries, owing to risk of re-trafficking or fear of retribution, should be granted viable alternatives, such as work permits or special residency status. In the case of repatriation, effective procedures and monitoring should be implemented to prevent re-victimization.

73. States, together with technology providers and relevant United Nations entities, should further examine the opportunities of technology for enhancing efforts to prevent and respond to the trafficking of women and girls. States should undertake further research into the opportunities and risks presented by technological advances, and the gender dimensions thereof, for the prevention and response to trafficking with a focus on data protection, privacy and ethical standards. Greater efforts should also be made to prevent the use of technology and, in particular, the Internet and social media, for trafficking.

74. The United Nations system and other concerned intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations should cooperate with Governments, with a view to improving the collection, analysis and dissemination of data disaggregated by sex and age to help to elucidate the gender dimensions of trafficking, especially regarding the various forms of exploitation. Further research should also be undertaken with regard to forms of trafficking that are not sufficiently explored within the context of trafficking, such as forced marriages and sham marriages.

75. The United Nations system should continue to support national efforts to address trafficking in women and girls in a coordinated way to ensure effective implementation and evaluation in a manner that provides positive outcomes for women and girls.

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## General Assembly

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### Seventy-third session

Item 74 (a) of the provisional agenda\*

**Promotion and protection of human rights:  
implementation of human rights instruments**

## **United Nations voluntary trust fund on contemporary forms of slavery**

### **Report of the Secretary-General**

#### *Summary*

The present report, submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution 46/122, provides an overview of the work of the United Nations voluntary trust fund on contemporary forms of slavery, in particular the recommendations for grants to beneficiary organizations that were adopted by the Board of Trustees of the fund at its twenty-second session, held in Geneva from 27 November to 1 December 2017. It also provides information on other recommendations adopted by the Board.

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\* A/73/150.



## **I. Introduction**

### **A. Submission of the report**

1. The present report was prepared in accordance with the arrangements approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 46/122, by which it established the United Nations voluntary trust fund on contemporary forms of slavery. It contains the recommendations adopted by the Board of Trustees of the fund at its twenty-second session, held in Geneva from 27 November to 1 December 2017. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights approved the recommendations on behalf of the Secretary-General on 19 December 2017.

### **B. Mandate of the fund**

2. In line with resolution 46/122, the fund was established with the purpose of extending humanitarian, legal and financial aid to individuals whose human rights have been severely violated as a result of contemporary forms of slavery. The fund receives voluntary contributions from Governments, non-governmental organizations, private or public entities and individuals.

### **C. Administration of the fund and Board of Trustees**

3. The Secretary-General administers the fund through the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), with the advice of a Board of Trustees and in accordance with the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations.

4. The Board of Trustees is composed of five members with relevant experience in the field of human rights and, in particular, issues of contemporary forms of slavery. They serve in their personal capacity and are appointed by the Secretary-General with due regard to equitable geographical distribution. The Board is currently composed of Danwood Mzikenge Chirwa (Malawi), Renu Rajbhandari (Nepal), Leonardo Sakamoto (Brazil), Georgina Vaz Cabral (France) and Nevena Vučković Šahović (Serbia) who has served as Chair of the Board since its twentieth session. Ms. Rajbhandari will serve as Chair of the Board in the inter-sessional period leading to the next session of the Board, in 2018.

## **II. Management of grants**

### **A. Admissibility criteria**

5. In accordance with the mandate of the fund, as set out in General Assembly resolution 46/122, the beneficiaries of assistance from the fund are individuals whose human rights have been severely violated as a result of contemporary forms of slavery. Project admissibility criteria are outlined in the fund's guidelines. Project proposals should be aimed at the delivery of assistance services to beneficiaries who are victims of contemporary forms of slavery and, when applicable, members of their families. As indicated in the fund's guidelines, contemporary forms of slavery that qualify for project grants include traditional slavery, serfdom, servitude, forced labour, debt bondage, the worst forms of child labour, forced and early marriage, the sale of wives and inherited widows, trafficking in persons and human organs, sexual slavery, the sale of children, the commercial sexual exploitation of children and the use of children in armed conflict.

6. Priority in allocating grants is accorded to projects implemented by civil society organizations that aim at providing rehabilitation, reparation, empowerment and integration services for victims of contemporary forms of slavery through direct assistance. This may include medical, psychological, social, legal, humanitarian and educational assistance, vocational or skills training or other assistance in support of an independent livelihood. Detailed information on the types of assistance provided to victims through the projects financed by the fund, as well as on their impact on the lives of the identified beneficiaries, is available from the OHCHR website.<sup>1</sup>

7. By 1 March 2017, the deadline for submitting applications for project grants for 2018, the fund had received 73 applications. After the applications were pre-screened by the secretariat of the fund, 71 were declared admissible and were examined by the Board at its twenty-second session.

8. The deadline for submitting applications for project grants for 2019 was 1 March 2018. Admissible project applications will be examined by the Board at its twenty-third session. In 2019, priority will continue to be given to project proposals intended to assist women and children victims of slavery as a consequence of conflicts and humanitarian crises.

## **B. Monitoring and evaluation by the secretariat of the fund**

9. At its twenty-second session, the Board was presented with 71 admissible applications for project grants that would be awarded for activities to be implemented from 1 January to 31 December 2018. Before the session, 43 of the project proposals had been evaluated through on-site visits by staff of the secretariat of the fund, OHCHR country and regional offices, human rights components of peacekeeping missions and members of the Board. On-site pre-screening and technical evaluation visits to applicant organizations are a crucial aspect of the fund. The visits provide an opportunity for the direct verification of new applicants, monitoring of activities supported by the fund over a number of years and the provision of feedback to grantees. For cost-efficiency purposes, on-site visits are coordinated by OHCHR, with visits undertaken on behalf of the United Nations voluntary fund for victims of torture.

## **III. Financial situation of the fund**

10. Notwithstanding the fundraising and outreach efforts of the members of the Board and the secretariat of the fund, underfunding remains to be an issue. Since 2002, the fund has received a total of \$8.5 million in contributions from Member States, which represents an average yearly income of \$500,000. A peak of contributions was observed in 2009 with an income amounting to \$886,000. To meaningfully fulfil its mandate and adequately respond to the needs of victims, the fund would require at least \$2 million in contributions each year. The contributions received in 2017 for 2018 covered barely 30 per cent of that target. For 2019, the fund aims at reaching the symbolic ceiling of \$1 million, encouraged by the positive feedback received on its operations by an increasing number of State representatives.

11. The table below shows the contributions and pledges received in 2017.

<sup>1</sup> See [www.ohchr.org/slaveryfund](http://www.ohchr.org/slaveryfund).

**Contributions and pledges received in 2017**

(United States dollars)

| <i>Donor</i>      | <i>Amount</i>  | <i>Date of receipt</i>       |
|-------------------|----------------|------------------------------|
| Australia         | 152 887        | 20 December 2017             |
| Germany           | 229 888        | 28 June and 29 November 2017 |
| Holy See          | 2 500          | 22 December 2017             |
| India             | 25 000         | 26 January 2017              |
| Ireland           | 5 313          | 23 December 2017             |
| Luxembourg        | 33 595         | 1 March and 24 October 2017  |
| Republic of Korea | 25 000         | 30 August 2017               |
| Saudi Arabia      | 75 000         | 26 May 2017                  |
| South Africa      | 6 327          | 30 March 2017                |
| Spain             | 41 273         | 30 October 2017              |
| Turkey            | 10 000         | 12 September 2017            |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>606 785</b> |                              |

**IV. Twenty-second session of the Board of Trustees**

12. The twenty-second session of the Board of Trustees was held in Geneva from 27 November to 1 December 2017. During the session on 1 December 2017, to mark the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, the fund convened an expert panel on the importance of specialized rehabilitation to enable victims of modern slavery practices to integrate into society and end the cycle of abuse. The panel, which included former victims of modern slavery, showcased the concrete experiences of grantees of the fund in the field of rehabilitation and the critical role it plays towards the empowerment of victims.

13. Furthermore, in line with the mission statement adopted on 26 November 2016 (A/71/272, para. 27), the Board continued to pursue closer coordination with other actors relevant to the field of contemporary forms of slavery. Against the backdrop of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Board had fruitful exchanges with the special procedures of the Human Rights Council (in particular, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences and OHCHR staff supporting the special procedure mandates on the sale of children and on trafficking in persons) and the secretariat in Vienna of the United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children and the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises. Members of the Board are of the view that only a close cooperation among relevant mandates and mechanisms will ensure a more effective response to victims of contemporary forms of slavery.

**A. Grant-making recommendations**

14. Following a thorough intersessional evaluation of admissible project proposals by the secretariat, the Board, at its twenty-second session, was presented with 71 applications for project grants, amounting to \$1.9 million requested for the assistance of victims of contemporary forms of slavery worldwide. The Board accorded priority to the review of project proposals that had been highly recommended for funding by

the secretariat. Through a competitive review based on both geographic and thematic criteria, it recommended the approval of 29 project grants, totalling \$503,500. The recommendations were approved by the High Commissioner on behalf of the Secretary-General on 19 December 2017. Five additional highly performing projects proposals (totalling \$80,900) could not be financed owing to insufficient funding.

15. In 2018, through the 29 grants, the fund is expected to assist non-governmental organizations in 27 countries, as follows: 6 projects in Asia, 8 in Africa, 4 in Eastern Europe, 5 in Latin America and the Caribbean and 6 in Western Europe and other States. Through the awarded projects, more than 10,000 victims are expected to be provided with redress and rehabilitation services after having been subjected to contemporary forms of slavery, such as the worst forms of child labour, traditional slavery, bonded and forced labour, sexual exploitation and trafficking in persons for labour and sexual exploitation. For example, in 2018, the fund will partner with an organization to implement a project in the Sayaxché region of Guatemala to provide social and legal support to 300 Maya Kekchi victims of forced labour as well as the dispossession of lands and environmental contamination generated by the palm oil industry. An organization in Nigeria will implement a project to provide humanitarian assistance, counselling and social support to deported boys and young women trafficked to Europe for sexual exploitation and forced labour. A Nepalese organization will provide social and legal support to landless bonded labourers to grant them access to identity documents and allow them to register for government plans. In Iraq, the fund will renew its support to an organization in Erbil that provides legal assistance to victims of sexual slavery and forced labour.

16. Figures 1 and II illustrate the breakdown, by region and type of contemporary slavery, of the 29 grants approved in 2018.

Figure I  
Grants awarded in 2018, by region

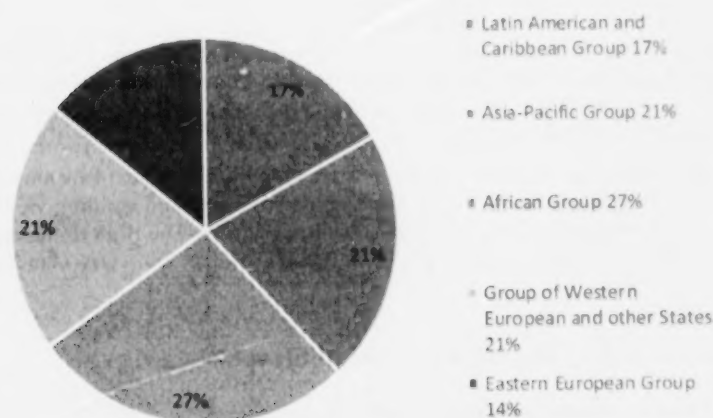


Figure II  
Grants awarded in 2018, by type of contemporary slavery



## B. Policy recommendations

17. During its twenty-second session, the Board also reviewed its working methods to align them fully with the fund's mission statement adopted on 26 November 2015 (see A/72/229, para. 12). In particular, the Board recommended that, as of 2018, annual grants should range between \$15,000 and \$30,000. In addition, a two-cycle gap should be applied to project proposals that have been evaluated as inadmissible and/or not recommended during the pre-screening phase by the secretariat. Finally, the Board recommended stricter implementation of the rule regarding a one-cycle gap for projects having been awarded funding for five consecutive years. The Board also recommended the annual holding of a public event in commemoration of the abolition of slavery, as a way to share knowledge and best practices in the field of rehabilitation and redress for victims of slavery.

18. Furthermore, for the 2019 call for project proposals, the Board recommended that priority be given to proposals intended to assist women and children victims of slavery as a consequence of conflicts and humanitarian crises. The High Commissioner approved all of the recommendations, on behalf of the Secretary-General, on 19 December 2017.

## C. International Day for the Abolition of Slavery

### Expert Panel on rehabilitation for victims of slavery

19. On the occasion of the International Day for the Abolition of Slavery, on 1 December 2017, the fund convened an expert panel to discuss the theme "Rehabilitation for victims of modern slavery". The following participated on the panel: Peggy Hicks, Director, Thematic Engagement, Special Procedures and Right to Development Division, OHCHR; Renu Rajbhandari, medical expert and member of the Board of Trustees of the fund; grantees of the fund, including Marcela Loaiza, former victim of sexual slavery and founder of Fundación Marcela Loaiza (Colombia), Suamhirs Piraino-Guzman, former victim of child sexual slavery, and behavioural

health specialist for the Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (United States of America); Issa Kouyaté, President, Maison de la Gare (Senegal); and Eileen Walsh, clinical psychologist, Helen Bamber Foundation (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland). The above-listed organizations and rehabilitation centres are all current grantees of the fund. The event was attended by representatives from Member States, civil society, United Nations entities and the general public. Australia, Germany and the Republic of Korea contributed financially towards the organization of the panel.

20. Ms. Hicks highlighted that, despite its absolute prohibition under international law for almost a century, it was estimated that over 40 million people, including 10 million children, still lived in enslavement, stripped of their rights, dignity and humanity. Torture persisted in many countries across all regions. She emphasized that the eradication of slavery required concerted and global action, recalling target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals, according to which Member States were specifically required to take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including the recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms. Ms. Hicks stressed that insufficient resources were placed into programmes for the rehabilitation for victims of slavery.

21. The grantees of the fund provided moving and direct accounts of the work carried out, with the support of the fund, to assist victims of slavery through various rehabilitation programmes, including for legal, psychosocial and economic empowerment. The presentations of the panellists were followed by a public debate. The poignant written and video testimonies of the victims and experts participating in the panel are available on the fund's website.

## V. How to contribute to the fund

22. Governments, non-governmental organizations and other private or public entities are invited to contribute to the fund. Donors should indicate "for the slavery fund, account SH" on a payment order. For more information on how to contribute and further details about the fund, donors are requested to contact the secretariat of the United Nations voluntary trust fund on contemporary forms of slavery:

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights  
United Nations  
CH 1211 Geneva 10  
Switzerland  
E-mail: [slaveryfund@ohchr.org](mailto:slaveryfund@ohchr.org)  
Tel: +41 22 917 9376  
Fax: +41 22 917 9017

## VI. Conclusions and recommendations

23. The Board of Trustees, jointly with the secretariat, has multiplied outreach initiatives to increase the visibility of the fund and enhance coordination with other actors involved in the eradication of all forms of slavery, including the special procedure mandates and the United Nations voluntary trust fund for victims of trafficking in persons, especially women and children.

24. In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Member States committed to combating inequalities and discrimination and to leave no one

behind. However, the discussions of the expert panel on rehabilitation facilitated by the Board of the fund at its twenty-second session clearly highlighted the scarcity of resources being placed into programmes for the rehabilitation and empowerment of victims of slavery.

25. Member States and other stakeholders, in particular the private sector, are urged to contribute to the fund as a concrete manifestation of their commitment to the elimination of slavery and fulfilment of target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Fund would need to receive \$1 million on a yearly basis in order to be able to respond more adequately to the requests it receives for assistance.

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**Seventy-third session**

Item 70 (a) of the provisional agenda\*

**Promotion and protection of the rights of children**

### **Protecting children from bullying**

#### **Report of the Secretary-General**

##### *Summary*

The present report of the Secretary-General, submitted in response to the request of the General Assembly in its resolution 71/176, follows the first report of the Secretary-General on protecting children from bullying (A/71/213), addresses the prevalence of bullying and its impact on children's rights and presents an overview of measures adopted by Member States and other stakeholders to prevent and respond to bullying.

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\* A/73/150.



## I. Introduction

"I was eight years old the first time that I was bullied. One of my classmates said to me, 'No one likes you. No one will ever like you'. From that day, I endured bullying every single day for eight years. I was verbally, physically, and cyber bullied. I believed my classmates. Their words started to become the constitution I lived by. I stopped speaking in school. I kept my head down and my eyes on the ground at all times. In a way, I began to give up".<sup>1</sup>

*Aija, a young writer*

### A. Background

1. In 2014, the General Assembly adopted resolution 69/158, in which it recognized the occurrence of bullying worldwide and its impact on children's rights, as well as its long-term effects on victims. The resolution encouraged Member States to take measures to prevent and respond to violence against children in schools, including all forms of bullying, and requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to its seventy-first session on protecting children from bullying.

2. The report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its seventy-first session in 2016 (A/71/213), the first report on protecting children from bullying, addressed the prevalence, causes and consequences of bullying, including cyberbullying. The report reviewed prevention and response measures adopted by Member States and other stakeholders and identified good practices, highlighted persistent challenges, recalled available data and provided guidance on priority actions needed.

3. The development of the report had special relevance as it was prepared in the second year of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The 2030 Agenda addresses violence against children as a distinct and cross-cutting concern, and includes concrete commitments under several Sustainable Development Goals. Under Goal 16, the 2030 Agenda includes a specific target to end the abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children (target 16.2). Goal 4.4 highlights the importance of knowledge and skills on human rights and the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence (target 4.7), as well as the provision of child, gender and disability sensitive facilities and safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all (target 4.a). Action on school violence and bullying is also critical to achieve the Goals on gender equality and good health and well-being.

4. In its resolution 71/176, the General Assembly took note of the report, in particular its conclusions and recommendations, and requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to the Assembly at its seventy-third session on the implementation of the resolution. The present report is submitted in response to that request.

<sup>1</sup> *Celebrating childhood: A journey to end violence against children*, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, United Nations Office at Nairobi, 2016 (available at <https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/news/celebrating-childhood-journey-end-violence-against-children>).

## B. Methodology

5. To inform the preparation of the report, a request for information was sent to Member States,<sup>2</sup> United Nations entities, independent national human rights institutions, civil society organizations and other relevant stakeholders.

6. In addition, information was gathered at three global consultations held on bullying, including online bullying (see sect. III below). The report has benefitted from a comprehensive literature review of studies and reports, including, *Ending the torment: tackling bullying from the schoolyard to cyberspace*,<sup>3</sup> issued by the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children.

7. In the light of the adoption of General Assembly resolution 71/176, information in the report gives particular consideration to the following measures by Member States: to prevent bullying, to protect children and to provide them with prompt response; to develop laws and policies, and to support them with awareness raising initiatives; to promote restorative practices to repair harm and rebuild relationships while addressing accountability of those responsible; to conduct research and consolidate data to inform effective and sustainable interventions; and, above all, to engage children in all these efforts in order to learn from their experiences and promote lasting change that safeguards their rights.

## II. Nature and scope of bullying

8. The Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes children's right to protection from all forms of violence, including physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse.<sup>4</sup>

9. As outlined in the previous report of the Secretary-General, bullying can be defined as intentional and aggressive behaviour occurring repeatedly against a victim where there is a real or perceived power imbalance, and where the victim feels vulnerable and powerless to defend himself or herself. The unwanted behaviour is hurtful: it can be physical, including hitting, kicking and the destruction of property; verbal, such as teasing, insults and threats; or relational, through the spreading of rumours and exclusion from a group.<sup>5</sup>

10. Bullying usually occurs without provocation, and it constitutes a form of peer violence. Children who bully often act out of frustration, humiliation and anger, or to achieve social status, and their actions can inflict physical, psychological and social harm. Children who are bullied are likely to experience interpersonal difficulties, to be depressed, lonely or anxious, to have low self-esteem and to suffer academically,

<sup>2</sup> Notes verbales were sent to all Permanent Missions to the United Nations in February 2018 and April 2018, drawing attention to General Assembly resolution 71/176 and requesting contributions for the present report.

<sup>3</sup> Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, *Ending the torment: tackling bullying from the schoolyard to cyberspace*, New York, 2016 (<https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/news/ending-torment-tackling-bullying-schoolyard-cyberspace>).

<sup>4</sup> See Convention on the Rights of the Child (resolution 44/25), articles 19, 28.2, 32 to 34, 37 (a) and 39.

<sup>5</sup> See also Olweus, D., *Bullying at school: What we know and what we can do (Understanding Children's Worlds)*, Wiley-Blackwell, 1993.

but all actors, including bystanders and the school climate as a whole, are affected detrimentally.<sup>6</sup>

11. The latest data on bullying highlights that worldwide more than 1 in 3 students (130 million) between 13 and 15 years of age experience bullying, and approximately 3 in 10 adolescents in 39 countries in Europe and North America admit to bullying others at school.<sup>7</sup>

12. Cyberbullying involves the posting or sending of electronic messages, including pictures or videos, aimed at harassing, threatening or targeting another person. A whole range of social platforms, including chat rooms, blogs and instant messaging, are used in cyberbullying.<sup>8</sup> Cyberbullying can cause profound harm as it leaves a permanent footprint in cyberspace, and can quickly reach a wide audience. Bullying and cyberbullying feed into each other, forming a continuum of damaging behaviour.

13. Whether online or in person, bullying is among children's top concerns. Although rates differ from country to country,<sup>9</sup> it is present and widespread throughout the world, affecting a significant percentage of children as victims, perpetrators or bystanders.<sup>10</sup>

### III. Working together: global consultations

14. Recognizing the importance of worldwide collaboration, in its resolution 71/176 the General Assembly called on the Secretary-General to support, in cooperation with United Nations agencies and other relevant stakeholders, the organization of follow-up expert consultations at the regional level, promoted by Member States, in order to raise awareness of the impact of bullying on the rights of the child and to share experiences and best practices.

15. Three expert consultations have been held, drawing on the expertise of Governments, young people, United Nations agencies, civil society organizations, the private sector, academia and regional bodies.

16. At the International Symposium on School Violence and Bullying: From Evidence to Action, held in Seoul from 17 to 19 January 2017,<sup>11</sup> the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Institute of School Violence and Prevention at Ewha Womans University presented a jointly prepared publication entitled *School Violence and Bullying: Global Status Report*. The report looked at major areas of concern, including children at particularly high risk and presented a review of the evidence on the scope, nature, drivers and impacts of school violence and bullying globally, and on existing education sector responses to school violence.

17. Recognizing the critical need to build a sound evidence base to inform action, a new platform for monitoring school violence and bullying was launched at the International Symposium: the platform includes three main components:

<sup>6</sup> See United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), "Stopping Violence in Schools: A Guide for Teachers, Paris, 2011 (<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001841/184162E.pdf>).

<sup>7</sup> United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), *A Familiar Face: Violence in the lives of children and adolescents*, New York, 2017 (<https://data.unicef.org/resources/a-familiar-face/>).

<sup>8</sup> A/HRC/31/20, paras. 59–66.

<sup>9</sup> See <http://www.who.int/chp/gshs/en>.

<sup>10</sup> Roman, Marcela, and Murillo, F. Javier, "Latin America: school bullying and academic achievement", *CEPAL Review*, No. 104, August 2011.

<sup>11</sup> In cooperation with UNESCO, the Institute of School Violence Prevention at Ewha Womans University and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children.

(a) The development by UNESCO of a periodic global progress report on school violence and bullying;

(b) The identification of indicators and survey questions to measure school violence and bullying;

(c) A dedicated webpage on the monitoring of school violence and bullying.

18. On 27 April 2018, the Government of Mexico, in cooperation with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), hosted the Inter-American Consultation of Experts on the Protection of Children from Bullying and Cyberbullying. Representatives of Governments and other stakeholders from across Latin America and the Caribbean took part in the meeting. Governmental representatives adopted a declaration expressing their commitment to work towards a region free from bullying and all other forms of violence against children, in close cooperation with children and adolescents themselves.

19. On 3 December 2017, China hosted the fourth World Internet Conference in Wuzhen. The forum included, for the first time, a session on "Safeguarding the Future: Online Protection of Underage Users". The forum, organized in cooperation with UNICEF and with the participation of the Special Representative, recognized the opportunities the Internet can bring to children, as well as the risks of exposure to online abuse, including cyberbullying. The forum highlighted the role and responsibility of the information and communications technology (ICT) industry in placing the protection of children's rights at the heart of technology and product innovation efforts and in developing industry standards to safeguard their online protection.

#### **IV. Measures to protect children from bullying**

20. The information presented below was informed by submissions received from 35 Member States<sup>12</sup> to the notes verbales from the Secretary-General requesting information on measures taken in response to General Assembly resolution 71/176.

##### **A. National policies, partnerships and awareness raising initiatives**

21. Several countries, including Armenia, Belarus, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Honduras, Iraq, Montenegro, Nicaragua, Romania, Slovakia, South Africa and Ukraine have developed national action plans to prevent and respond to school violence and bullying.

22. Building partnerships across different fields and between various actors has proven to be an effective way to tackling bullying, and several countries are following this approach. Within the framework of its comprehensive strategy for the prevention of school bullying and other types of violence, Mexico has established 14 community networks in four states, implementing training, workshops and cultural activities.

23. A model of knowledge mobilization, designed to stop bullying and create safe environments for children in Canada, PREVNet, the national authority on promoting relationships and eliminating violence, has grown significantly in recent years. It is

<sup>12</sup> Submissions were received from: Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Belarus, Canada, China, Croatia, Cuba, Ecuador, France, Georgia, Greece, Honduras, Iraq, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Lithuania, Malaysia, Mexico, Montenegro, Peru, Qatar, Romania, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Switzerland, Ukraine and Zambia. Submissions from Member States are available in the files of the Secretariat.

now a network of 28 universities and 62 national youth service organizations and its mission is to stop bullying and promote safe and healthy relationships through education, research, training and policy change.

24. In Japan, the Tokyo metropolitan government is implementing a bullying prevention programme, developed in partnership with the Children's Institute for the Future of Tokyo Gakugei University. The programme addresses four themes: creating an environment where bullying is never ignored; understanding differences; establishing favourable relationships; and controlling emotions.<sup>13</sup>

25. A number of countries are spreading messages to prevent bullying through national awareness raising campaigns. In Kenya, 1.5 million children participated in the ninety-first national music festival in 2017, a unique and long-standing tradition in Kenya in support of music and drama performances in schools throughout the country, with around nine million children and young people participating in and benefiting from advocacy messages developed by children and their teachers. In Canada, National Pink Shirt Day in 2018 focused on cyberbullying. Each year in Romania campaigns promoted with Save the Children Romania and UNICEF help to raise awareness about the issue: most recently these included the 2017–2018 "Stop Bullying" campaign. In 2017, in Cuba, the tenth annual day against homophobia and transphobia was dedicated to the topic of bullying against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/transsexual and intersexed students in schools.

26. Action to combat cyberbullying has become a focus in several countries. Many, including Belarus, Croatia, Italy, Japan, Jordan, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Qatar, Romania, Slovenia and Switzerland, have supported the establishment of national hotlines. In cooperation with UNICEF, Montenegro has developed a smartphone app targeting children aged from 9 to 11 years of age to guide them through real life scenarios and to provide access for the reporting of cases of violence. In the Russian Federation, a webpage on cybersafety has been launched by the Centre for the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Children.

27. In other recent examples, Italy has invested €2.5 million in the *Generazioni Connesse* network for the promotion of the responsible use of the Internet; Ukraine has addressed inappropriate content for children through *Internet Patrol*; and Afghanistan developed a policy to protect children using the Internet.

28. As noted in the annual report of the Special Representative to the Human Rights Council at its twenty-eighth session,<sup>14</sup> while ICTs offer enormous benefits to children, they also present risks. There is growing recognition of the need to ensure that in protecting children from the harms of the Internet, they are not denied access to the full potential of ICTs, including access to knowledge and engagement as innovators and creators of content themselves.

29. In July 2018, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted a recommendation (CM/Rec (2018)7) on children's access to the digital environment, which highlights the same approach and promotes children's safety from online risks, including cyberbullying.

30. An extensive evaluation of existing initiatives within the European Union for the protection of children in the digital age carried out in 2018 proposes stepping up awareness and empowerment, including the development of an integrated approach to media literacy for children and young people, that will support critical

<sup>13</sup> UNESCO, *School Violence and Bullying: Global Status Report*, Paris, 2017 (<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002469/246970e.pdf>), p. 36.

<sup>14</sup> A/HRC/28/55.

understanding, creative production and participation as well as protective actions and technical skills.<sup>15</sup>

## **B. Legislation on children's protection from bullying**

31. Legislation is a key element of a comprehensive strategy to protect children from school violence and bullying. Laws help to convey a clear message to society condemning violence and are the foundation for a culture of respect for children's rights. To be effective, laws must be enforced, and translated into action.

32. As acknowledged in the first report of the Secretary-General on protecting children from bullying, approaches to legislation on bullying worldwide are varied. While some Member States have adopted specific anti-bullying laws, others address the problem within existing constitutional, criminal and civil legal provisions.

33. Some countries, including Australia, Canada, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Honduras, Japan, Mexico, Peru, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea and Sweden, have specific legislation addressing school violence and or bullying. School bullying is covered by other relevant laws in Ireland, Singapore, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America.

34. Recognizing the importance of addressing violence in children's earliest years, the Government of Finland revised its Early Childhood Education and Care Act, in 2015, requiring care providers to protect children from bullying, harassment and other violence.

35. To address cyberbullying, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines and the United States have adopted specific legislation, and in 2017, legislation against bullying enacted in Italy also specifically refers to cyberbullying, explicitly requiring Internet providers to remove harmful content and information if requested to do so by concerned persons.

36. Important provisions have also been introduced in criminal legislation to tackle racism, cyberbullying and harassment. In 2016, El Salvador passed a law against computer-based and related crimes, which includes the criminalization of the use of ICTs to threaten the psychological, emotional or physical well-being of children, adolescents and people with disabilities. Greece has recently adopted laws that criminalize racism, homophobia and other forms of discrimination when perpetrated through ICTs.

37. In this regard, it is important to ensure that, as highlighted by the first report of the Secretary-General on protecting children against bullying, care is taken to avoid the imposition of measures that could worsen children's sense of alienation or resentment, or place them at further risk of victimization or criminalization.

38. In France, the Office of the Defender of Children's Rights promotes the protection of children's rights and best interests and considers cases of peer bullying and of adults bullying children within schools. It can investigate cases, review what actions have been taken, and, if the case needs to be followed up in the courts, inform the Public Prosecutor. It can also recommend what actions need to be taken within schools to prevent and respond to bullying.

<sup>15</sup> Livingstone, S; Tambini, D; and Belakova, N, (2018), Research for the Committee on Culture and Education of the European Parliament: *Recommendations for EU policy developments on protection of minors in the digital age*, Brussels: European Parliament, Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies.

### C. Quality and safe education for all children

39. Education plays a vital role in preventing violence, both within schools and in the wider community. A safe school promotes respect for human rights and a culture of peace and non-violence, which are essential both for children's well-being and to provide the best environment for learning. But schools often reflect wider cultures of violence within the community and the home.<sup>16</sup>

40. The Government of South Africa has noted significant concerns throughout the country about the lack of safety in schools, and research shows that violence in schools is often an extension of violence in society. In provinces where the threat of crime is high, so too is the level of bullying at schools.<sup>17</sup>

41. A study in Chile<sup>18</sup> shows that 33.1 per cent of children believe that bullying is a serious or very serious problem, and 13.5 per cent feel unsafe or very unsafe in school — primarily due to their physical appearance (62.6 per cent), their gender expression (38.3 per cent) or because they are, or are believed to be, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/transsexual and intersexed (31.4 per cent). In this regard, 70.3 per cent of students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender/transsexual and intersexed report feeling unsafe in school and being victimized.

42. A common reason that children give for dropping out is that the school environment feels threatening and unsafe. Research indicates that the impact on the education of victims of school violence and bullying is significant. International learning assessments clearly show that bullying reduces students' scores.<sup>19</sup> Analyses of data from Ethiopia, India, Peru and Viet Nam reveal that violence in schools, including physical and verbal abuse by teachers and by other students, is the most common reason given for disliking school, and, significantly, it is associated with lower scores in mathematics and lower self-esteem.

43. Several countries have been working on initiatives to create safe schools and to change norms that perpetuate violence and bullying.<sup>20</sup> In the United Arab Emirates, the Supreme Council of Motherhood and Childhood, the Ministry of Education and the Abu Dhabi Education Council have worked with UNICEF to pilot an anti-bullying programme to increase awareness about bullying among students and school staff. The results of the assessment of the programme showed significant reductions in being bullied and bullying others among girls, while feeling safe at school remained an issue for many students.<sup>21</sup>

44. To promote inclusive and quality education and to address school violence in Lebanon, the Ministry of Education, in cooperation with the Ministries of Social Affairs and Justice and UNICEF, developed a child protection policy that includes a comprehensive methodology for early identification and referral of cases of violence and engages a wide range of stakeholders. Interventions include training for teachers and guidance for students, with a focus on creating a safe school environment based on fairness and non-discrimination.

<sup>16</sup> Pellis, K., Ogando Portela, M.J., and Espinoza, P., "Poverty and inequity: multi-country evidence on the structural drivers of bullying" in *Ending the torment: tackling bullying from the schoolyard to cyberspace*, New York, 2016.

<sup>17</sup> Submission from South Africa.

<sup>18</sup> The study is quoted in the Government of Chile's National Plan of Action for Childhood and Adolescence 2018–2025.

<sup>19</sup> See UNESCO, *School Violence and Bullying: Global Status Report*, Paris, 2017, p. 30.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

<sup>21</sup> UNICEF, Gulf Area Subregional Country Programme (2017) ([https://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Gulf\\_Area\\_Subregional\\_Programme\\_2017\\_COAR.PDF](https://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Gulf_Area_Subregional_Programme_2017_COAR.PDF)), pp. 6, 21 and 23.

45. Many countries, in recognizing that strong, caring relationships are key to developing tolerance and mutual respect, are taking action to nurture the building of such relationships within schools and the wider community. Studies of school-based life skills and social and emotional training programmes have shown that they reduce fighting, hitting, bullying and verbal conflict by 25 per cent among all students and by 33 per cent among selected high-risk groups of students.<sup>22</sup>

46. In China, guidelines on preventing school violence and bullying in primary and secondary schools adopted in 2016 require that schools implement a special education programme to prevent school violence. Schools must also establish timely reporting mechanisms for cases of violence, and strengthen school management and parent education.

47. In September 2017, the Government of China issued a paper containing opinions on deepening the reform of educational institutions and mechanisms, which emphasized the importance of helping children to acquire the knowledge, attitude and skills they need to manage their emotions, cooperate with others and establish healthy relationships and of supporting children's academic learning. In pursuance of this aim, the Ministry of Education is working with UNICEF to promote a social emotional learning approach, which includes training and resources for teachers in rural schools to build students' capacities in this regard, and a "Say no to bullying" topic in the curriculum.

48. In Jordan, the *Tarbiyeh* transformative behaviour programme, part of the Ma'an campaign to reduce violence in schools, has been implemented in 50 schools, reaching over 11,000 students. The programme has also been implemented in six schools in Za'atari refugee camp and has reached close to 4,000 students. Similar programmes have been introduced at 87 schools operated by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and at 69 centres in informal tented settlements. When evaluated, participating schools outperformed non-project schools in reducing physical violence.

49. In Georgia, during the period from 2015 to 2017, 1,056 school resource officers and 1,576 school principals participated in a project called, "Child abuse: referral procedures when a child is in need of protection", which included training on the prevention and response to bullying. In Bahrain, the Child Protection Centre provides a wide range of social, psychological, health, educational and legal services for children and young people, and treatment sessions encourage children to acquire vital self-reliance and self-protection skills.

<sup>22</sup> See World Health Organization, *INSPIRE: Seven Strategies for Ending Violence against Children*, Luxembourg, 2016 ([http://www.who.int/violence\\_injury\\_prevention/violence/inspire/en/](http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/inspire/en/)), p. 71.

### KiVa in the United Kingdom

As highlighted in the first report of the Secretary-General on protecting children from bullying, KiVa is a whole-school programme developed in Finland that has been implemented in 90 per cent of schools in Finland with decisive success and has been replicated in other parts of the world.<sup>23</sup>

In the United Kingdom, over 100 primary schools, mainly in Wales, are now trained and involved in the KiVa programme, and it is spreading to schools throughout England, with support from a team of local trainers coordinated by Bangor University. By 2017, 500 teachers had been trained, and they are now delivering the programme to over 12,000 students between 7 to 11 years of age. Recent results from the evaluations of 41 schools that delivered the programme for 12 months demonstrate significant reductions (approximately 14 per cent) in both victimization and bullying. A case study from one highly successful school has helped to identify factors that made the KiVa implementation successful and these have been incorporated into the training programmes for new schools.<sup>24</sup>

## D. Capacity-building of professionals working with and for children

50. Evidence shows that teachers who model pro-social, constructive behaviour, provide guidance and offer protection can increase their students' resilience by showing a positive, alternative way of responding to life's challenges.<sup>25</sup> Teachers themselves, however, at low salaries and with little backing, often work in stressful and violent environments. Support and training are therefore essential to enable them to understand the complex issues of bullying and how to address it, not least by considering and modifying their own behaviour.

51. The Government of Zambia has introduced in-service training programmes for teachers to equip them to care and protect children from various forms of abuse, including bullying and cyberbullying. Armenia has developed training programmes for educators throughout educational institutions, which include topics on the prevention of bullying and the promotion of tolerance.

52. In Lithuania, a national qualification programme to build the capacities of teachers, including self-assessment tools, is being developed by experts. In Azerbaijan, the Ministry of Education, working with UNICEF, is focusing on training teaching staff in child development, child protection and psychology. The Protection and Social Rehabilitation Centre (AMAN), a non-profit civil society organization in Qatar conducts awareness raising activities in schools to develop the skills of teachers and school social workers and to train them in the early detection of, and response to, bullying.

53. The Ministry of Education in Malaysia is developing the safe school concept through its implementation guide for the school community and family. In Croatia, the Ministry of Science and Education is providing in-service teacher training to raise awareness of the dangers of bullying.

<sup>23</sup> A/71/213, paras. 48 and 49.

<sup>24</sup> See Children's Commissioner for Wales, "Sam's Story, Listening to children and young people's experiences of bullying in Wales", 2017 (<https://www.childcomwales.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Sams-Story.pdf>).

<sup>25</sup> UNESCO, "Stopping Violence in Schools: A Guide for Teachers, Paris, 2011 (<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001841/184162E.pdf>), p. 19.

54. In Saudi Arabia, the National Commission for Child Welfare, in partnership with the Directorate of Private Schools and Kindergartens, UNICEF and the Arab Gulf Programme for Development, launched a “Towards a Safe Environment for Children”, a personal safety programme for kindergartens that aims to develop skills for children, their teachers, parents and caregivers.

55. Building capacity among teachers is critical, but so too is training for other professionals working with children. Many Member States are providing such support. Canada is investing in initiatives to build the capacity of health and social service professionals and, through an action plan to eliminate sexual violence and harassment, is funding system leaders to respond to cyberbullying. Switzerland has ongoing training for nursing professionals, health assistants and nursery nurses on the role they play in relation to parents in violence prevention. In the Philippines, the Anti-Bullying Act (2013) provides the framework for national awareness raising and capacity-building initiatives, which include parent and family information sessions and orientation for professional groups and community leaders.<sup>26</sup>

56. In December 2017, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation approved the framework for the development of psychological services in the education system up to 2025. The most important goals include the design and creation of a nurturing and safe educational environment and professional assistance in overcoming school-related anxiety, fears, phobias and affective and personality disorders.

## E. Child participation and empowerment

57. The active participation of children and adolescents is essential in all efforts to prevent and address bullying and to shed light on its hidden aspects. Their insights are critical to a clear understanding of the problem and also to effectively tackling it. Within schools, experience shows that interventions are more effective when children and young people are involved in their planning and implementation.<sup>27</sup>

58. The Office of the Ombudsman for Children in Norway has promoted and disseminated recommendations on how to address bullying behaviour that are based on the input young people, including recommendations that: students should be informed of their rights; schools should employ school psychologists; teachers should listen more to students; schools should have regular “student reviews” where children can report bullying; and teachers should work on cases of bullying until they are resolved and be commended for handling them.<sup>28</sup>

59. In 2017, UNICEF and other partners implemented a pilot programme for adolescents in South Sulawesi and Central Java provinces in Indonesia. The programme put forward a student led, action-research approach to building a child-friendly school environment. Students were encouraged to be the agents of change through designing and implementing solutions to bullying and evaluating the results. Results from South Sulawesi show a nearly 30 per cent reduction in bullying over the course of a year; in one school in Makassar, a 50 per cent reduction in relational bullying was reported by both boys and girls.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> UNESCO, *School Violence and Bullying: Global Status Report*, Paris, 2017 (<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002469/246970e.pdf>), p. 34.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 43–44.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>29</sup> See UNICEF, *Annual Report 2017, Indonesia, Executive Summary* ([https://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Indonesia\\_2017\\_COAR.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Indonesia_2017_COAR.pdf)).

60. An in-depth national survey conducted in Ecuador has provided extensive information for the formulation of the national plan to create "Harmonious Coexistence and a Culture of Peace" in schools. The plan aims to reduce violence and bullying through strengthening relationships and building capacity within educational institutions, including training and support for teachers.

61. Since 2006, "SOS mini-letter" sets have been distributed to all school children in Japan, allowing them to send their concerns about school violence, including bullying, directly to the Ministry of Justice. Supported by significant awareness raising and online resources, and a wide network of human rights volunteers, this initiative ensures that children's voices are heard and acted on.

62. Research in the United States suggests that the most effective initiatives are those where students and teachers work together to develop and implement strategies to make schools safe, as children can provide information about what is going on and usually have a better understanding of what is happening within the school.<sup>30</sup>

63. The insights to be gained directly from children are poignantly captured in the words of a teenage boy speaking during consultations in Latin America with children whose parents were in detention: "People who do not like you say, oh, your relative is in jail. They start saying things about you as if you were the delinquent". Children taking part in the study reported suffering stigmatization, discrimination and social condemnation, and, in particular, being rejected, avoided and feared.<sup>31</sup>

## F. Restorative justice and accountability

64. Children's participation is essential to understand the issues of bullying, but it is also critical that their opinions contribute to decisions taken on their behalf. Children and young people frequently voice concern that no action is taken on reported bullying. This adds to their fear of reporting cases, not least because the bullying may get worse as a result of their speaking out. Restorative approaches are an important way of repairing harm and mending relationships among children while promoting the accountability, rather than punishment, of those found responsible. Such approaches offer an opportunity for all children concerned to tell their side of the story and to involve the whole community in a mediation process. This is particularly important in the case of children who bully, who in many cases have themselves been victims of bullying, as they have an opportunity to assume responsibility for their actions and to commit themselves to repairing the harm they have caused. In addition, this approach helps victims to feel their views are respected and reduces fear within the school environment.

65. Such measures have been adopted in several countries, including Ecuador, Honduras, Jamaica and the Dominican Republic. In Norway, when bullying is reported to police, the case may be referred to the Norwegian Mediation and Reconciliation Services, which uses restorative justice approaches to resolve conflicts. In the Russian Federation the inclusion of a restorative approach in the learning process, including the use of mediation techniques in schools, has

<sup>30</sup> See UNESCO, *School Violence and Bullying: Global Status Report*, Paris, 2017 (<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002469/246970e.pdf>), p. 44.

<sup>31</sup> As a contribution to the development of the global study on children deprived of liberty, the Special Representative, together with Governments and civil society partners in Latin America, undertook consultations and organized focus groups with children whose parents are in detention. The 26 focus groups were conducted in collaboration with *Gurises Unidos* (Kids United) and the NNAPES organization, which works with children with incarcerated parents. Children aged from 6 to 17 from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and Uruguay participated in the consultations.

contributed to the successful achievement of goals set out in the psychological services framework introduced by the Ministry of Education and Science (see para. 56 above). The Italian Authority for Children and Adolescents has been working on restorative approaches through its project, "From clash to encounter: learning through mediation". In Serbia, the Government is developing a rulebook for schools that includes elements of restitution and mediation, and promotes the importance of everyone taking responsibility within the institution.

66. As noted in the previous report of the Secretary-General on protecting children from bullying (A/71/213, para. 87), although research on the impact of restorative practices in schools is limited, available evidence suggests positive effects, including: improvement in school culture; greater community and parent engagement; decreased use of exclusionary discipline; increased student connectedness; and decreased levels of fighting and bullying.

## G. Research, data collection, analysis and use

67. Accurate, reliable, comprehensive and disaggregated data on the prevalence, nature and causes of bullying is critical to inform effective responses. Data is also essential to quantify the costs of bullying. Because of its damaging effects on learning and behaviour caused by fear and insecurity, tolerance of bullying in schools risks wasting public investment in children.<sup>32</sup>

68. Critically, monitoring and evaluation are essential to understand what works in different contexts and to strengthen the evidence base for effective interventions.<sup>33</sup> Too often, schools have been laboratories for approaches with poor evidence-based effect.<sup>34</sup>

69. Children's experiences of being bullied occur within the context of wider economic and social inequalities, such as poverty and gender norms, and the risk factors are mixed and often specific to the country and context.<sup>35</sup> The analysis of disaggregated data is thus crucial to inform prevention strategies.

70. The value of this approach is demonstrated in a recent study supported by the United States Agency for International Development. The study measured the effects of bullying on academic performance using extensive datasets from Botswana, Ghana and South Africa. It found that bullying is pervasive in all three countries and that it is one of the key drivers of low academic achievement. In Botswana, bullied students score lower in science, mathematics and reading tests than those who are not. In South Africa, their reading scores are significantly lower. In Botswana, female students who experienced bullying suffered from lower academic scores than male students who were bullied, while in South Africa the reverse is true. In Ghana the impact was the same.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Richardson, D., and Hiu, C.F. "Global data on the bullying of school-aged children", in *Ending the torment: tackling bullying from the schoolyard to cyberspace*, New York, 2016.

<sup>33</sup> UNESCO, *School Violence and Bullying: Global Status Report*, Paris, 2017 (<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002469/246970e.pdf>), p. 47.

<sup>34</sup> Lindboe, A., and Cameron, A., "The role of independent human rights institutions in preventing and responding to bullying", in *Ending the torment: tackling bullying from the schoolyard to cyberspace*, New York, 2016.

<sup>35</sup> Pells, K., Ogando Portela, M.J., and Espinoza, P., "Poverty and inequity: multi-country evidence on the structural drivers of bullying" in *Ending the torment: tackling bullying from the schoolyard to cyberspace*, New York, 2016.

<sup>36</sup> United States Agency for International Development (2016), Kibriya, S., et al., *The Effects of School-Related Gender-Based Violence on Academic Performance: Evidence from Botswana, Ghana, and South Africa* (<http://condevcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/The-Effects-of->

71. This data underscores the need to assess both country-specific and gender-specific ramifications of bullying in order to design programmes that address, among other variables, culturally-specific differences related to gender.

72. The Slovak National Centre for Human Rights has recently conducted a survey aimed at supporting a safe school environment for children and adequate working conditions for teachers through mapping types and trends of bullying and cyberbullying. The data will be analysed and the results published at the end of 2018. Jamaica is currently conducting a study involving 70 public schools in order to: identify and assess the variables that contribute to bullying; develop a profile of both bullies and victims; design an integrated response to raise awareness of the issue at a national level; and implement programmes to reduce instances of peer abuse.

73. Since 2017, UNICEF has collaborated with the World Health Organization on a programme to build the evidence of what works when addressing violence against children in schools, including bullying, using case studies from El Salvador and Uganda. It is expected that an evaluation of the programmes will provide lessons learned for planning and evaluating further interventions.

## V. Emerging areas of concern

74. Since the first report of the Secretary-General, there has been a greater understanding of the manifestations and impact of bullying, as well as of emerging areas of concern.

75. In evidence drawn from a wide literature informed by Governments, United Nations agencies, academia, civil society and children themselves, the importance of promoting further research on such emerging areas is emphasized. This includes: children's exposure to violence in their early years and the critical role of parents in prevention and response;<sup>37</sup> the impact of teacher's roles and attitudes on children's lives; and bullying in sports.

### A. Preventing bullying and other forms of violence in early childhood

76. Early childhood is widely regarded as a critical period of development. But it is also an especially vulnerable time for exposure to violence. Advances in neuroscience have made it possible to assess the impact of violence on very young children and have shown that exposure to violence produces abnormal levels of stress hormones which disrupt the brain, affecting cognitive development and language acquisition. During the child's first 1,000 days, the brain develops faster than at any other time of life and needs nurturing and loving care. The impact of fear and violence on the other hand can disrupt development, potentially affecting the child's ability to tolerate stress and anxiety in the future.<sup>38</sup>

77. Very young children exposed to violence may develop an exaggerated physiological response and abnormal reactivity to subsequent stressors. This can affect their tolerance of and ability to control stress later in life, leading to increased feelings of fear and the risk of developing psychological dysfunctions such as mood

School-Related-Gender-Based-Violence-on-Academic-Performance-Evidence-from-Botswana-Ghana-and-South-Africa.pdf).

<sup>37</sup> See Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children (2018). "Violence prevention must start in early childhood" (<https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/sites/violenceagainstchildren.un.org/files/documents/publications/earlychildhood.pdf>).

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

disorders, aggressive behaviour and depression. It can also lead to the acceptance of and “normalization” of violence.<sup>39</sup>

78. In a recent report, UNICEF found that 6 in 10 children aged between 12 to 23 months of age are subjected to violent disciplinary methods, including physical punishment and verbal abuse, including shouting, yelling or screaming, as well as being called offensive names.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, 176 million children below five years of age witness domestic violence on a regular basis.

79. Research has found that the parent-child relationship is a significant factor in predicting bullying behaviour in adolescence.<sup>41</sup> There is also evidence of a link between domestic violence and bullying in schools: children who bully others are almost two times more likely to have been exposed to domestic violence than other children.<sup>42</sup>

80. Ongoing research makes clear that children’s experiences of being bullied occur within the context of wider economic and social inequalities,<sup>43</sup> and are linked with the violence that occurs in the home and in the wider community. Intervention in early childhood provides a unique opportunity to reduce the negative effects of violence.

81. Most importantly, public policies that support families in their child-rearing responsibilities help prevent the risk of violence in children’s lives.<sup>44</sup> Parenting skills programmes that go hand in hand with social protection interventions help to promote a nurturing family environment and the child’s sense of belonging, reduce the risk of social exclusion and deprivation, prevent family stress and tackle social norms that condone violent forms of child discipline. Many of these programmes focus on the importance of soothing distressed children, from their birth onwards, rather than responding with anger, shouting or physical punishment.<sup>45</sup>

82. Recognizing the importance of supporting the efforts of parents to create a protective environment for their children, several countries are endeavouring to change harsh child-rearing practices and attitudes. For example, the Dominican Republic has invested in building the capacity of parents and caretakers through programmes promoting positive child rearing. Recognizing the need for support to parents, the Ministry of Health in Slovenia has developed the “Incredible Years” programme to impart good parenting skills.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> UNICEF, *A Familiar Face: Violence in the lives of children and adolescents*, New York, 2017, p. 20.

<sup>41</sup> Nation, M., Vieno, A., Douglas D. Perkins, Santinello, M. (2008), “Bullying in school and adolescent sense of empowerment: an analysis of relationships with parents, friends, and teachers”, in *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, Vol. 18.

<sup>42</sup> See Bernacchi, E., Fabris, A., and Zelano M., “Multi-country Study on the Drivers of Violence Affecting Children (Italian Report)”, Istituto degli Innocenti, Florence, 2016.

<sup>43</sup> Pells, K., Ogando Portela, M.J., and Espinoza, P., “Poverty and inequity: multi-country evidence on the structural drivers of bullying” in *Ending the torment: tackling bullying from the schoolyard to cyberspace*, New York, 2016.

<sup>44</sup> See UNESCO, *School Violence and Bullying: Global Status Report*, Paris, 2017.

<sup>45</sup> The success of such approaches has been evaluated by the Harvard Graduate School of Education, with funding from the Wallace Foundation: “Navigating Social and Emotional Learning from the Inside Out”, March, 2017 (<http://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/Navigating-Social-and-Emotional-Learning-from-the-Inside-Out.pdf>).

## B. Modelling positive behaviour: the impact of teachers' roles and attitudes

"The way children treat each other at school mirrors the way adults treat each other in society. This means that crudeness, violence and slanderous language are all in effect, even in childhood."

*Kathleen, a young writer*<sup>46</sup>

83. School violence remains a challenge for many children. As reported in the UNESCO global status report, *School Violence and Bullying*, research has found that the ways in which schools are organized and the norms and values promoted, especially through disciplinary practices, can give rise to increased levels of bullying. For example, a study on violence in schools in Ghana, Malawi and Zimbabwe highlighted how gender-based violence occurred against the backdrop of high levels of bullying and physical punishment. In some contexts, adults view physical punishment, fighting and bullying as part of discipline or growing up, thus normalizing these behaviours. It is evident that the actions and attitudes of teachers can shape the behaviours and responses of children.

84. Research has also revealed that the quality of children's relationships with the adults in their lives is important, and that teachers can play a central role in reducing and preventing violence and bullying among children — both through their relationships with students and the modelling of non-violent behaviour. Interventions that have focused on transforming the culture of schools, taking a strong stance against violence and supporting the use alternative ways of disciplining children and managing the classroom by teachers have proven to be particularly effective.<sup>47</sup>

85. In Indonesia, a positive discipline programme for teachers was first implemented in 2015, and was later integrated into a pre-existing initiative to boost literacy rates in the province of Papua. A mid-line review of the programme demonstrated decreases in both physical and emotional violence by teachers: physical punishment dropped from 20 per cent to 4 per cent, with an equally significant drop in use of emotional punishment from 13 per cent to 4 per cent.<sup>48</sup>

86. In South Africa, the "positive behaviour framework", which aims to create positive, predictable environments for all students, recommends empirically tested clear instructional principles on how to teach expected, appropriate, positive behaviour for all students, including the modelling of appropriate behaviour by teachers.

## C. Breaking the silence on bullying in sports

87. Sport, which is hugely popular among children and young people worldwide, is beneficial for their social, psychological and physical well-being. Many adolescents spend their free time playing sport in schools, their neighbourhoods and in sports clubs where they can exercise while interacting with friends. Bullying in sport exists,

<sup>46</sup> *Celebrating childhood: A journey to end violence against children*, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, United Nations Office at Nairobi, 2016 (<https://violenceagainstchildren.un.org/news/celebrating-childhood-journey-end-violence-against-children>).

<sup>47</sup> See UNESCO, *School Violence and Bullying: Global Status Report*, Paris, 2017.

<sup>48</sup> See UNICEF, *Annual Report 2017, Indonesia, Executive Summary* ([https://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Indonesia\\_2017\\_COAR.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/Indonesia_2017_COAR.pdf)).

yet it is not always recognized or addressed, and as yet there is little data on the subject.

88. Research recently conducted in Portugal and the United Kingdom analysed the incidence and nature of bullying behaviours among male adolescent athletes.<sup>49</sup> Of those athletes taking part in the study, research revealed that: about 10 per cent reported having been victimized; 11 per cent reported that they had participated in bullying; and 35 per cent reported having been bystanders to bullying. Bullying episodes were often characterized as being of low frequency and low duration and most frequently as verbal bullying inside the sport club. It was reported, however, that episodes repeated over time involved multiple types of bullying, particularly verbal and social exclusion, and as taking place not only inside the clubs but during competition.

89. In the highly competitive sporting environment, where winning is an important objective, the risk of bullying is clearly present. Stronger and better performing athletes are highly rewarded, while the less successful can feel rejected. Low achievers in these circumstances are at risk of bullying and cruel teasing.

90. Although the frequency of bullying in sports may appear to be lower than that reported in schools, this could be explained by the fact that victims tend to abandon sport practice early specifically to avoid bullying. Moreover, bullying in the sports context may be seen as acceptable competitive aggressive behaviour and a natural part of the game. Complaints could therefore easily be perceived as a sign of weakness. Emerging research acknowledges that bullying in sports is of growing concern, and further efforts are needed to inform the development of broad-based intervention programmes for sports' organizations, including guidance for athletes, parents and coaches.<sup>50</sup> Not only are competitive sports players in need of protection from bullying, so too are the children who drop out early, and who miss out on the health and other benefits of exercise.

91. As in the case of bullying in school, adults — and especially in this case coaches — can play a critical role. Their actions can either reinforce feelings of exclusion and low self-esteem among the children under their supervision or they can play a positive role in preventing and tackling bullying.

92. Recognizing the concerns in this field, in April 2018, Finland launched a helpline for children and adults to report bullying in sports. Run by the Family Federation of Finland, the helpline, which is promoted by well-known sportspeople, aims to prevent and reduce bullying, sexual harassment and other forms of violence in sport.

## VI. Conclusions and recommendations

93. As recognized in the first report of the Secretary-General on protecting children from bullying (A/71/213), bullying affects a high proportion of children, compromising their health, emotional well-being and school performance, and is associated with devastating lifelong consequences. Fortunately, and as the present report illustrates, significant efforts are under way worldwide to tackle bullying, involving different sectors of society in promoting the protection of children from its damaging effects.

<sup>49</sup> Nery, M., Neto, C., Rosado, A., and Smith, P.K., "Bullying in youth sport training: A nationwide exploratory and descriptive research in Portugal", *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*, March 2018.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

94. Nevertheless, a wide empathy gap remains, with many adults still oblivious to incidents of bullying and its traumatic impact, or perceiving it as a normal part of growing up. At the same time, children are still often afraid to speak out and suffer in isolation.

95. Bullying can be prevented when children have safe and nurturing environments, where adults support them and model positive behaviour. Interventions around the world have been shown to work, but more needs to be done to replicate these successes.

96. Extensive efforts have been undertaken by Member States to prevent and respond to bullying since the subject was first raised by General Assembly in its resolution 69/158, but it is imperative to further the implementation of measures to protect children from its dangers.

97. The thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the first global review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2019, including Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 16, (including target 16.2 to end all forms of violence against children), present a strategic opportunity to reinforce action and accelerate progress towards the elimination of bullying and of all other forms of violence against children. In this process, particular emphasis should be placed on the following areas:

(a) Awareness raising initiatives are critical to keep bullying prevention in the public eye, inform society of its dangers and provide information to children that encourages them to speak up and seek support: information and social mobilization initiatives must be sustained over time, with high visibility, in order to change attitudes that condone school violence and bullying and to provide practical feedback that will support children's enjoyment of their rights;

(b) Children are key experts on bullying as they are the ones who suffer from its harmful effects and are uniquely placed to inform solutions: children must therefore be part of all efforts aimed at prevention, protection and response, must be provided with opportunities to participate effectively and must be informed of available support services; in particular, children in vulnerable situations must be given priority, including through efforts to promote mutual respect and tolerance for diversity that overcome stigmatization, discrimination or exclusion based on, inter alia, race, ethnicity, disability, gender or sexual orientation;

(c) Parents and caregivers need support in developing skills in non-violent discipline and modelling respectful and compassionate behaviour as nurturers, including information that helps them to detect the warning signs of bullying and to support their children when they are affected by peer violence and violence at school;

(d) Whole-school programmes that engage the wider community have been shown to be most effective in preventing and responding to bullying; such efforts must be child-centred, involve all actors, including students, teachers, school staff, parents and local authorities, and must be sustained by strong leadership and adequate resources: teachers, who play a central role in these efforts, must be supported through training on how best to prevent and respond to bullying, inter alia, through modelling positive behaviours, and through specialized training to facilitate discussions about bullying, as, fearing a negative reaction, children may be afraid to share information with adults; and they must learn to respond without delay to reported cases of bullying;

(e) Legislation must underpin comprehensive policies to prevent and respond to bullying in order to give weight to their enforcement, and laws are critical to specify prohibited conduct and to safeguard the rights of affected children, including through child sensitive counselling, complaint and reporting mechanisms: legislation

is equally important in establishing protection for groups at special risk of bullying, including cyberbullying, and restorative approaches should be given priority in this regard so as to prevent recidivism and avoid the imposition of measures that could worsen children's sense of alienation and place them at further risk of victimization or criminalization;

(f) Accurate, reliable and disaggregated data is critical to breaking the silence and promoting positive changes to prevent and tackle bullying, and evidence-based initiatives are essential to providing effective prevention and response measures: programmes that work to strengthen children's life skills and inform them of ways to prevent and respond to violent behaviour and bullying, and to resolve conflict, can be replicated and expanded across communities, schools and within countries, but these programmes must be informed by sound research that considers children's experiences and the influence of different social and cultural contexts, and further research is needed on emerging areas of concern, including: the effect of violence against children in early childhood and the detrimental ways in which it affects their adult lives; the behaviour of teachers and its impact on the perpetuation of violence and bullying in schools; and the potentially far-reaching impact of bullying in sports.

98. With the leadership and ongoing support of Member States and the combined efforts of all sectors of society, it is possible to protect children from the torment of bullying and to prevent the harm that it wreaks on so many of the world's youngest citizens.

"It will get better. There is always someone to talk to. Whether that's your mum, sister, teacher or peer. There is someone who wants to help; and you have to let them."

*Secondary school student*<sup>51</sup>

<sup>51</sup> See Children's Commissioner for Wales, "Sam's Story, Listening to children and young people's experiences of bullying in Wales", 2017.

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**Advancement of women****Intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilation****Report of the Secretary-General***Summary*

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 71/168, on intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilation, the present report provides information on the root causes of and factors contributing to the practice of female genital mutilation, its prevalence worldwide and its impact on women and girls, including relevant evidence and data. It also provides an analysis of progress made to date by Member States and the United Nations system. The report includes conclusions and recommendations for future action.

\* A/73/150.



## I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 71/168, the General Assembly reaffirmed that female genital mutilation was a harmful practice, a form of violence against women and girls, and that it was inherently linked to deep-rooted negative norms, stereotypes, perceptions and customs that negatively impact women and girls' human rights, along with their physical, mental, sexual and reproductive health. The Assembly reaffirmed that the elimination of female genital mutilation could be achieved through the efforts of a comprehensive movement, involving a wide range of stakeholders from different sections of society.

2. The Assembly called upon States, *inter alia*, to place a stronger focus on comprehensive prevention strategies and the provision of multisectoral services and to put in place accountability mechanisms to monitor the implementation of legislation. The Assembly stressed that the empowerment of women and girls was crucial to breaking the cycle of discrimination and violence that they faced and urged States to allocate sufficient resources to the implementation of policies and programmes aimed at eliminating the practice.

3. In paragraph 26 of the resolution, the Secretary-General was requested to submit to the Assembly at its seventy-third session an in-depth, multidisciplinary report on the root causes of and factors contributing to the practice of female genital mutilation, its prevalence worldwide and its impact on women and girls, including evidence and data, analysis of progress made to date and recommendations for its elimination.

4. The present report examines the latest developments, ongoing challenges and innovative practices in eliminating female genital mutilation, in the context of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its central tenet of "leaving no one behind". The report is based on information and submissions received from Member States<sup>1</sup> and relevant entities of the United Nations system<sup>2</sup> and is informed by the latest research findings, evidence and data. It covers the period from 1 August 2016 to 30 June 2018.

## II. Global and regional normative developments

5. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development includes, under Sustainable Development Goal 5, targets for both the elimination of harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation (target 5.3), and the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls (target 5.2). Female genital mutilation is part of a continuum of violence that women and girls can experience at any time throughout their life cycle. Female genital mutilation has a serious impact on the lives and health of women and girls, including their sexual and reproductive health, and severely restricts their equal access to education and income-generating opportunities, along with the ability to have an equal say in decisions that affect their lives. As an impediment to realizing gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, the eradication of female genital mutilation and other forms of violence against women and girls should

<sup>1</sup> Submissions were received from Andorra, Argentina, Austria, Cameroon, Cabo Verde, Croatia, Colombia, Cyprus, Denmark, El Salvador, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Indonesia, Ireland, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Mexico, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Switzerland, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

<sup>2</sup> Submissions were received from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations trust fund in support of actions to eliminate violence against women.

be pursued within broader efforts to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

6. Efforts to eliminate harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation, should also target the groups of women and girls who are most at risk, in particular those who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, including refugee and migrant women, women living in rural and remote communities and young girls, so as to leave no one behind. Similarly, the principles of universality and respect for human rights that underpin the 2030 Agenda mandate that stakeholders address female genital mutilation, regardless of individual circumstances, prevailing cultural and social norms, or country of origin or destination.

7. During the reporting period, the international community made clear commitments at global and regional venues, including at a high-level ministerial meeting on female genital mutilation, held on 15 and 16 November 2017 in Accra, and the Commonwealth Women's Forum, held from 16 to 18 April 2018 in London, to eliminate the practice of female genital mutilation. Commitments were made to engage in closer regional cooperation, in particular in regard to rural, refugee and migrant women and girls, to greater engagement with local communities, and to increase resources for policies and programmes. There was greater recognition that harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation, child, early and forced marriage, and violence against women and girls, have common root causes, including gender inequality and discrimination perpetuated by patriarchal structures and the unequal distribution of power between men and women.

8. Regional forums<sup>3</sup> also acknowledged the need to frame the issue within the broader child protection framework and to support the elimination of the practice within the context of Agenda 2063 of the African Union and the 2030 Agenda. States have also been called upon to be more vigilant in relation to detecting, investigating and prosecuting cases of female genital mutilation.<sup>4</sup>

9. At its sixty-second session, in its agreed conclusions (E/CN.6/2018/L.8), the Commission on the Status of Women urged Governments and invited other stakeholders to eliminate female genital mutilation and other harmful practices, which disproportionately affected women and girls living in rural areas, including by empowering parents and communities to abandon such practices.

10. The Human Rights Council has addressed female genital mutilation as a human rights violation, recognizing that the practice constitutes torture and degrading treatment, and has noted that the trend towards its medicalization does not make it more acceptable (see A/HRC/RES/38/6). It has called upon States to strengthen their national legislation to address the cross-border practice of female genital mutilation through enhanced transnational cooperation between law enforcement and judicial officials (*ibid*). In addition, the Council has acknowledged the links between the practice and maternal mortality, the lack of health-care services, information and education, as well as malnutrition and poverty (see A/HRC/RES/33/18).

11. In its general recommendation No. 35 (2017) on gender-based violence against women, updating general recommendation No. 19 (CEDAW/C/GC/35), the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women affirmed that harmful practices were forms of gender-based violence against women affected, *inter alia*, by cultural, ideological and political factors. In addition, the Committee recommended that State

<sup>3</sup> For example, the fifty-second ordinary session of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Authority of Heads of State and Government, held on 16 December 2017 in Abuja, and the tenth annual women's conference of the Pan-African Parliament, held on 12 and 13 October 2017, in Johannesburg, South Africa.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example European Parliament resolution 2017/2936 (RSP).

parties repeal provisions that tolerated or condoned forms of gender-based violence against women, including harmful practices.

12. In considering the reports of States parties, although the Committee has welcomed legislative and other measures taken to eliminate the practice (see, for example, CEDAW/C/NLD/CO/6 and CEDAW/C/CAN/CO/8-9), it has also expressed concern about the condition of young girls, often from migrant families, who have undergone or are at risk of being subjected to female genital mutilation, as well as the lack of crucial information on where to seek help (see, for example, CEDAW/C/HE/CO/4-5 and CEDAW/C/DEU/CO/7-8). The Committee has recommended awareness-raising campaigns and the training of health and social services professionals to identify survivors and to hold the perpetrators accountable (*ibid*).

### III. Current context and progress to date

#### A. Prevalence of female genital mutilation

13. In 2016, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) released data indicating that at least 200 million girls and women in 30 countries with representative data on prevalence had undergone female genital mutilation.<sup>5</sup> Of those 200 million, more than half lived in three countries: Egypt, Ethiopia and Indonesia.<sup>6</sup> Increasingly, girls are undergoing female genital mutilation at a younger age, and those who are 15 years of age and younger represent just over one fifth (i.e., 44 million) of those who have been cut.<sup>7</sup>

14. Data from large-scale representative surveys show high or almost universal prevalence in several countries in Africa. In Egypt, Guinea and Somalia, levels of prevalence of female genital mutilation among girls 15 to 49 years of age were 87, 97 and 98 per cent, respectively. By contrast, the prevalence is much lower in other countries of the continent, affecting, for example, 4 per cent of the same age group in Ghana and 2 per cent in the Niger.<sup>8</sup>

15. Female genital mutilation continues to be practiced in areas of the Middle East and Asia. In Yemen, 85 percent of girls undergo the practice within the first week of their life, while in Indonesia, approximately half of girls under the age of 12 undergo some form of the practice.<sup>9</sup> Female genital mutilation is also present in countries that do not have official data, where evidence is derived from small-scale, outdated studies or anecdotal reports. For example, the existence of the practice among the Avar community in the Kakheti region of Georgia was reported.<sup>10</sup> In India, a small-scale study found that 80 per cent of Dawoodi Bohra women surveyed indicated that they had been cut.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>5</sup> UNICEF, "Female genital mutilation/cutting: a global concern" (2016). Available at [www.unicef.org/media/files/FGMC\\_2016\\_brochure\\_final\\_UNICEF\\_SPREAD.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/media/files/FGMC_2016_brochure_final_UNICEF_SPREAD.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>8</sup> UNICEF, "Percentage of girls and women aged 15-49 years who have undergone FGM (by place of residence and household wealth quintile)". Available at <https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-protection/female-genital-mutilation>.

<sup>9</sup> UNICEF, "Indonesia: statistical profile on female genital mutilation/cutting". Available at [https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/country\\_profiles/Indonesia/FGMC\\_IDN.pdf](https://data.unicef.org/wp-content/uploads/country_profiles/Indonesia/FGMC_IDN.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> Public Defender of Georgia, "Public Defender's statement on female genital mutilation". Available at <http://ombudsman.ge/en/news/public-defenders-statement-on-female-genital-mutilation-page>.

<sup>11</sup> Mariya Taher, "Understanding female genital cutting in the Dawoodi Bohra community: an exploratory survey", Sahiyo, 2017.

16. Some recent studies, conducted mainly in Europe, have attempted to quantify the number of immigrant women and girls who have undergone or are at risk of undergoing the practice. Those efforts have not been systematic, however, and the overall prevalence for the continent is unknown. A 2017 report from Germany found that 47,359 women and girls living in Germany had undergone female genital mutilation, an increase of 30 per cent since 2014.<sup>12</sup> In Cyprus, according to data published in 2018, it is estimated that between 12 and 17 per cent of a total population of 758 girls 0 to 18 years of age who originally came from countries where female genital mutilation was practiced were at risk of undergoing female genital mutilation.<sup>13</sup> With population movement, female genital mutilation is becoming a practice with global dimensions, in particular among migrant and refugee women and girls.

17. There is evidence of an overall decline in the prevalence in female genital mutilation in Africa during the past three decades, with 1 in 3 girls who are currently 15 to 19 years of age having undergone the practice, compared with 1 in 2 in 1985. That decline is particularly visible in countries such as Burkina Faso, Kenya, Liberia and Togo.<sup>14</sup>

18. However, the latest research indicates that the prevalence is increasing in other regions. According to data released in 2018, more than 200,000 women and girls in Australia have either undergone or are at high risk of undergoing female genital mutilation, which represents an increase of 252 percent since 2014. The data partially attribute the upsurge to increased migration to Australia from countries in which it is practiced.<sup>15</sup>

19. In addition, according to data released by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in 2018, previous estimates of the number of girls undergoing female genital mutilation each year did not include data from some high-risk countries such as Indonesia, thus underestimating the true extent of female genital mutilation in those countries. It is estimated that 15 million girls will have undergone female genital mutilation in Indonesia by 2030.<sup>16</sup>

20. Furthermore, youth demographics are a critical factor in estimating the number of girls at risk of undergoing female genital mutilation globally. In some countries with representative data indicating high prevalence rates, 30 per cent or more of the female population is under the age of 15.<sup>17</sup> The latest projections show that the number of girls who will undergo female genital mutilation each year will rise to 4.6 million in 2030 from an estimated 3.9 million in 2015, and that increase will be most evident in countries such as Egypt, Ethiopia, Nigeria and the Sudan.<sup>18</sup>

21. If progress to eliminate female genital mutilation is not accelerated at a faster rate than that witnessed in the past three decades, the number of girls and women undergoing female genital mutilation will continue to increase and the reduction in

<sup>12</sup> Available at <https://www.netzwerk-integra.de/startseite/studie-fgm>.

<sup>13</sup> European Institute for Gender Equality "Female genital mutilation: how many girls are at risk in Cyprus?" Available at [http://eurogender.eige.europa.eu/system/files/events/files/eige\\_fgm\\_cyprus\\_country\\_profile.pdf](http://eurogender.eige.europa.eu/system/files/events/files/eige_fgm_cyprus_country_profile.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> UNICEF, "Percentage of girls and women aged 15–49 years who have undergone FGM (by place of residence and household wealth quintile)".

<sup>15</sup> No FGM Australia, "FGM prevalence in Australia, 2018". Available at <http://nofgm.org.au/2018/03/07/new-report-fgm-prevalence-australia-2018>.

<sup>16</sup> UNFPA, "Bending the curve: FGM trends we aim to change". Available at [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/18-053\\_FGM-Infographic-2018-02-05-1804.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/18-053_FGM-Infographic-2018-02-05-1804.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2015). *World Population Prospects: The 2015 Revision*. Available at <https://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Publications/>.

<sup>18</sup> UNFPA, "Bending the curve: FGM trends we aim to change".

global prevalence will be eclipsed by overall population growth in countries where the practice takes place. That projection is supported by results from phases I and II of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting.<sup>19</sup> For example, it has been estimated that Kenya, which has achieved the highest annual average rate of change towards the elimination of female genital mutilation of all 17 countries participating in the programme, would have to undergo a four-fold increase in its current rate of change in order to eliminate the practice by 2030.<sup>20</sup>

## B. Root causes, contributing factors and consequences

22. There are complex underlying motivations and reasons behind the perpetuation of female genital mutilation that stem from deep-seated gender inequalities and gender-based discrimination against women and girls. Those include a desire to control female sexuality and to limit the right of women and girls to decide on matters relating to their own bodies. Other reasons include to ensure chastity, social status and marriageability, in particular where female genital mutilation is a pre-requisite; religious narratives that sanction the practice; the ritual marking of a girl's transition into adulthood, which is often linked to other harmful practices including child, early and forced marriage; and limited access to education and economic opportunities for women and girls.

23. Female genital mutilation crosses economic, educational, social and geographical lines. There are various influences and protective factors that link the abandonment of female genital mutilation to household income, urbanization and education (see A/71/209). Recent research has demonstrated that attitudes towards elimination are changing among younger, formally schooled women, who are taking up leading roles in reshaping gender norms.<sup>21</sup> Also, changes in traditional family structures, shifts in women's economic and social roles and their influence on household and community decision-making processes, along with changing attitudes regarding female genital mutilation and marriageability, may influence the abandonment of the practice. Studies have also shown that structural interventions, such as the introduction of legislation banning child marriage, can also have an indirect but far-reaching influence on other harmful practices such as female genital mutilation. Further research is needed, however, to better understand the broader social, economic and political factors that can affect the decisions that families and communities make about the practice.<sup>22</sup>

24. Female genital mutilation operates as a social convention and norm and is held in place by reciprocal expectations within communities. As a result, the social rewards and sanctions associated with the practice are a powerful determinant of both the continuation and the abandonment of the practice.<sup>23</sup>

25. Data released in 2016 by UNICEF indicate that, although over two thirds of women and girls 15 to 49 years of age (67 per cent) and almost the same percentage

<sup>19</sup> The Joint Programme operates in Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, the Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, the Sudan, Uganda and Yemen.

<sup>20</sup> UNFPA and UNICEF, "Proposal for phase III of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme — Elimination of female genital mutilation: accelerating change" (2017).

<sup>21</sup> Hannelore Van Bavel, Gily Coene and Els Leye (2017), "Changing practices and shifting meanings of female genital cutting among the Maasai of Arusha and Manyara regions of Tanzania", *Culture Health and Sexuality*, vol. 19, No. 12 (2017).

<sup>22</sup> Bettina Shell-Duncan, Reshma Naik and Charlotte Feldman-Jacobs, "A state-of-the-art synthesis on female genital mutilation/cutting: what do we know now?" (New York, Population Council, 2016).

<sup>23</sup> UNFPA and UNICEF, "Proposal for phase III of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme — Elimination of female genital mutilation: accelerating change".

of men and boys (63 per cent) oppose the continuation of the practice in their communities,<sup>24</sup> those attitudes vary widely across and within countries. For example, in Mali, a comparison of multiple indicator cluster survey data across a five-year period showed that, in regions where female genital mutilation is less practiced, such as Timbuktu and Gao, the approval rate for its continuation had almost doubled and increased by five-fold, respectively.<sup>25</sup> Such a significant increase may be due to various factors, including the displacement of populations and the aftermath of occupation by various Islamist groups.

26. The desire for social acceptance and to avoid social ostracism as a result of not undergoing female genital mutilation is the most significant factor influencing the practice. Families and girls who refuse to undergo female genital mutilation may even experience violence.<sup>26</sup> In Indonesia, in 8 out of 10 cases, it is parents who make the decision as to whether their daughters undergo female genital mutilation, and they are likely influenced by religious and cultural beliefs about the practice. In contrast, traditional leaders are influencers in 18 per cent of cases.<sup>27</sup>

27. Experiencing female genital mutilation is invariably traumatic for women and girls, and the risk of adverse health outcomes rises with the degree of severity of the practice. According to the World Health Organization, women and girls can experience a range of symptoms, including shock, severe pain, excessive bleeding, genital tissue swelling and impaired wound healing.<sup>28</sup> Female genital mutilation is estimated to lead to an additional one to two perinatal deaths per 100 deliveries. There are also reports of post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression and memory loss associated with the practice.<sup>29</sup> Many women, however, who undergo the practice as infants or young children may not link complications arising later in life directly to the practice that they underwent when they were younger.<sup>30</sup>

28. While women and girls are subjected to female genital mutilation, their families, including their children and other male and female relatives, as well as the wider community, may be psychologically and emotionally affected by their suffering, including long after the community has abandoned the practice.<sup>31</sup>

### C. Innovative practices to eliminate female genital mutilation: challenges and lessons learned

29. Eliminating female genital mutilation should involve a multidisciplinary approach to both preventing and responding to the practice. It should involve the engagement and coordination of key stakeholders, including various sectors of Government and a range of civil society organizations, along with United Nations entities. Adopting that approach requires stakeholders to undertake comprehensive interventions such as adopting laws and policies, providing high-quality multisectoral interventions for girls and women who have been subjected to female genital

<sup>24</sup> UNICEF, "Female genital mutilation/cutting: a global concern" (2016).

<sup>25</sup> UNICEF, "Multiple indicator cluster survey: final report". Available at <http://mics.unicef.org/surveys>.

<sup>26</sup> Hannelore Van Bavel, Gily Coene and Els Leye (2017), "Changing practices and shifting meanings of female genital cutting among the Maasai of Arusha and Manyara regions of Tanzania".

<sup>27</sup> UNICEF, "Indonesia: statistical profile on female genital mutilation/cutting".

<sup>28</sup> World Health Organization (WHO), "Health risks of female genital mutilation (FGM)". Available at [http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/fgm/health\\_consequences\\_fgm/en](http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/fgm/health_consequences_fgm/en).

<sup>29</sup> Samuel Kimani, Jacinta Muteshi and Carolyne Njue, "Health impacts of FGM/C: a synthesis of the evidence" (New York, Population Council, 2016).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> End FGM European Network, "How to talk about FGM", position paper, December 2016.

mutilation, and robust prevention strategies, taking into consideration those girls and women who are most vulnerable. Data are also needed to inform policy and programming, as well as to monitor progress.

30. It is essential that adequate financial resources be provided to pursue a comprehensive approach to addressing female genital mutilation as a form of violence against women and girls with increased short- and long-term health risks, including sexual and reproductive health risks. The recently launched Spotlight Initiative,<sup>32</sup> a joint effort by the United Nations and the European Union, supported by an initial investment of 500 million euros, has galvanized such a comprehensive approach, which encompasses measures in the areas of law and policy, prevention, services and data collection to address violence against women and girls, including harmful practices. The Spotlight Initiative will focus on harmful practices and sexual and reproductive health in its programming in Africa. It aims to strengthen collaboration among relevant actors, including national Governments and civil society, and to demonstrate that interventions addressing gender inequality and violence against women, when adequately funded, can positively impact the realization of all Sustainable Development Goals.

31. During the reporting period, States reported on measures to address female genital mutilation, often with a focus on the principle of leaving no one behind, as set out in the 2030 Agenda, as well as on the need to make connections with efforts to address other forms of violence against women and girls and gender inequality more broadly.

#### a. Enabling environment

32. Political commitment at the highest levels is critical to successfully eradicating female genital mutilation. At the regional level, such expressions of commitment have included the appointment by the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children of the First Lady of Burkina Faso as a Goodwill Ambassador to address harmful practices such as female genital mutilation.<sup>33</sup>

33. At the national level, the temporary ban on female genital mutilation, issued by the President of Sierra Leone in 2014 as part of efforts to halt the spread of the Ebola epidemic, has remained in place and has not been lifted by the newly elected Government. Similarly, in 2018, in Liberia, the Ministry of Internal Affairs re-issued a circular that suspended the activities of so-called "bush schools", among which included conducting female genital mutilation in rural areas.

34. A review of the first two phases of the Joint Programme has concluded that developing laws that criminalize female genital mutilation is important in creating an enabling environment to end the practice.<sup>34</sup> In addition, drafting laws through a consultative and participatory process greatly facilitates and enhances the effectiveness of enforcement.<sup>35</sup> The implementation of legislation is a crucial next step. The effective investigation, prosecution and enforcement of legislation, in addition to the provision of sufficient financial resources in support of interventions, are necessary for the successful abandonment of female genital mutilation.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>32</sup> See <http://www.un.org/en/spotlight-initiative/index.shtml>.

<sup>33</sup> See <http://iac-ciaf.net/iac-goodwill-ambassador>.

<sup>34</sup> UNFPA and UNICEF, "Proposal for phase III of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme — Elimination of female genital mutilation: accelerating change".

<sup>35</sup> Bettina Shell-Duncan, "From health to human rights: female genital cutting and the politics of intervention", *American Anthropologist*, vol. 110, No. 2 (2008).

<sup>36</sup> UNFPA and UNICEF, "Proposal for phase III of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme — Elimination of female genital mutilation: accelerating change".

35. A major barrier to ending the practice is the lack of enforcement and implementation of legislation criminalizing female genital mutilation, in particular given the sensitive, intimate and often secretive nature of the practice. During the reporting period, Governments strengthened legislation, policies and their implementation. To date, 25 of 55 States members of the African Union have legislation criminalizing the practice.<sup>37</sup> In the European Union, 18 of 28 member States have ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), which addresses the criminalization of female genital mutilation and provides a comprehensive framework for prevention, protection and prosecution.

36. In 2017, to address cases of female genital mutilation, Georgia amended its Criminal Code to include a provision criminalizing all forms of female genital mutilation and the coercion of a girl or woman to undergo that procedure, which is punishable by imprisonment for a term of two to six years. The Joint Programme also supported the amendment of laws in Egypt, Mauritania and Uganda, resulting in increased penalties for those convicted of performing female genital mutilation, while Mali adopted two regulations banning female genital mutilation by health-care workers.

37. In the United States of America, the states of Michigan and Virginia adopted legislation prohibiting female genital mutilation, with the result that the practice is now criminalized in just over half of all states in that country. Other countries, including Andorra, Argentina, Cameroon, Croatia, Denmark, El Salvador, Mexico, Tunisia and Turkey, have addressed the practice within broader national legal frameworks, including child protection frameworks, to protect girls from violence, including female genital mutilation. Mauritania has addressed the issue within national legislation on reproductive health.

38. In its Development Policy Action Plan on Gender Equality (2016–2020), Germany committed itself to eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls, including female genital mutilation. With support from the United Nations, Sierra Leone developed a draft national strategy for the reduction of female genital mutilation, and Ireland is due to publish a second national intercultural health strategy, which will reference all health-related elements of the practice.

39. The cross-border aspect of the practice of female genital mutilation continues to pose a major barrier to prosecution. To address this, several States (Austria, Cabo Verde, Cyprus, Denmark and Kenya) reported that they had strengthened legislation to punish offenders in cases when the crime had been committed in another country. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland reported that it had strengthened the implementation of such legislation, including through special protection orders.

40. In many countries, however, such actions have not afforded vulnerable girls sufficient protection, especially during the so-called “vacation cutting season”, when they return to their home countries to undergo the practice during holidays. In 2018, similar to the model introduced in the United Kingdom by the Metropolitan Police Service, the Border Force and the National Crime Agency in 2016, “Operation Limelight USA” was initiated at several domestic airports in the United States by US

<sup>37</sup> UNFPA, “Female genital mutilation (FGM) frequently asked questions”. Available at [https://www.unfpa.org/resources/female-genital-mutilation-fgm-frequently-asked-questions#banned\\_by\\_law](https://www.unfpa.org/resources/female-genital-mutilation-fgm-frequently-asked-questions#banned_by_law).

Immigration and Customs Enforcement to increase public awareness and help deter the practice.<sup>38</sup>

41. The enforcement of legislation criminalizing female genital mutilation also remains a challenge owing in part to either weak capacity and reluctance of police and justice officials to hold perpetrators accountable, underreporting for fear of prosecution,<sup>39</sup> lack of knowledge of the law and secrecy surrounding the practice,<sup>40</sup> or the difficulty of meeting the burden of proof that the practice has taken place. Moreover, there is limited monitoring of prosecutions of cases of female genital mutilation, given that most States are not uniformly collecting data on the practice.<sup>41</sup>

42. Despite those challenges, it was evident during the reporting period that Governments have made efforts to enforce existing laws. Data reveal that, in 2016, 253 cases of female genital mutilation were brought to court and 77 individuals were convicted in the 17 countries where the Joint Programme operated, which was more than double the respective figures for the previous year.<sup>42</sup> Kenya, for example, established a specialized unit, developed guidelines for the prosecution of the practice and deployed 20 prosecutors to high-prevalence counties. In the United States, the first federal prosecution of a case involving female genital mutilation performed by doctors on two seven-year-old girls was filed in Michigan in 2017.

43. Through a joint initiative of UNFPA and the Africa office of Equality Now, and under the auspices of the Joint Programme, a tracking tool to address the challenge of effectively monitoring reported cases of female genital mutilation has been developed. The tool promotes accountability during the reporting, investigation and prosecutorial stages of cases and allows authorities to document instances where the girls have been spared the practice, owing to proactive judicial mechanisms and alternatives to criminal prosecution, such as injunctions and parental agreements. With support from the Joint Programme, innovative training on a tool for collecting and sharing data on cases of female genital mutilation through mobile phones and computers was conducted for law enforcement officials in Guinea, which resulted in the prosecution of 44 cases, the arrest of 11 people and 2 convictions.<sup>43</sup>

#### **b. Addressing the needs of survivors**

44. Girls and women who have been subjected to or are at risk of female genital mutilation should have access to a set of comprehensive, high-quality and coordinated support services that respond to both their short- and long-term needs. These include health-care, psychosocial and legal support, and assistance from the police and with finding suitable shelter. The services should, at a minimum, uphold the rights, safety and dignity of all girls and women.

<sup>38</sup> United States Department of Justice, "OVW Principal Deputy Director Katie Sullivan participates in outreach efforts for Operation Limelight", Available at <https://www.justice.gov/ovw/blog/ovw-principal-deputy-director-katie-sullivan-participates-outreach-efforts-operation>.

<sup>39</sup> Hannelore Van Bavel, Gily Coene and Els Leye (2017), "Changing practices and shifting meanings of female genital cutting among the Maasai of Arusha and Manyara regions of Tanzania".

<sup>40</sup> European Institute for Gender Equality "Female genital mutilation: estimating the number of girls at risk in the EU-Report", Available at [http://eurogender.eige.europa.eu/system/files/events-files/eige\\_fgm\\_report\\_0.pdf](http://eurogender.eige.europa.eu/system/files/events-files/eige_fgm_report_0.pdf).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> UNFPA-UNICEF, "Accelerating change by the numbers: 2016 annual report of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting — accelerating change", Available at [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/UNFPA\\_UNICEF\\_FGM\\_16\\_Report\\_web.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/UNFPA_UNICEF_FGM_16_Report_web.pdf).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

45. Several United Nations entities, programmes and funds have supported Governments and local organizations in providing access to services for survivors. For example, the Joint Programme reported that, during phase II (2014–2017), more than 3 million girls and women, including those at risk, received health, protection, legal and welfare services, and over 36,000 delivery points had been set up in schools, health facilities, community centres and child protection units to offer services to address female genital mutilation.<sup>44</sup>

46. The United Nations trust fund in support of actions to eliminate violence against women has supported grass roots organizations in providing access to medical and psychosocial services for survivors of female genital mutilation. For example, in 2017, 5,182 participants (both female and male) in Mali received information on the negative consequences of female genital mutilation on women and girls' sexual and reproductive health, and some were also referred to appropriate care services for follow-up. Kenya has developed standard operating procedures for service providers on the management of complications involving female genital mutilation.

47. In 2018, the World Health Organization launched a new clinical handbook on the care of girls and women living with female genital mutilation to assist health-care workers in providing high-quality and appropriate health care for girls and women who have undergone any type of procedure at any time in their lives.<sup>45</sup>

48. States have taken measures to address the needs of particular groups, including migrant women and girls. Greece, for example, reported that it was establishing reception centres to provide safe refuge to migrant women and girls at risk. Ireland was supporting a specialist clinic operated by the Irish Family Planning Association, where girls and women who have undergone female genital mutilation could access free specialized medical and psychological care.

49. There was evidence during the reporting period of the greater use of information technology to provide services to women and girls who have undergone or were at risk of female genital mutilation. The European Knowledge Platform for Professionals Dealing with Female Genital Mutilation, developed by the End FGM Network in partnership with Cyprus University of Technology, provides information, tools and support for professionals in the health, social services, child protection, immigration, police and justice sectors. Similarly, as part of the Network Against Female Genital Mutilation, Switzerland has launched an Internet platform that provides information, tools and resources for professionals, along with a separate community site for women at risk.

50. Evident during the reporting period is the increasing trend in medicalization, namely, the performance of female genital mutilation by health personnel. While medicalization is concentrated in Africa, health professionals worldwide have been asked to perform the practice.<sup>46</sup> Medicalization of female genital mutilation both institutionalizes and normalizes it, making the process of complete abandonment more difficult. It can also give the impression that the practice is without health consequences.<sup>47</sup> The World Health Organization (WHO) is opposed to the practice being carried out by health-care providers.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>44</sup> UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme performance analysis for phase II, forthcoming.

<sup>45</sup> WHO, *Care of Girls and Women Living with Female Genital Mutilation: A Clinical Handbook* (Geneva, 2018).

<sup>46</sup> Samuel Kimani and Bettina Shell-Duncan, "Medicalized female genital mutilation/cutting: contentious practices and persistent debates", *Current Sexual Health Reports*, vol. 10, No. 1 (2018).

<sup>47</sup> Ian Askew and others, "A repeat call for complete abandonment of FGM", *Journal of Medical Ethics*, vol. 42, No. 9 (2016).

<sup>48</sup> WHO, "Health risks of female genital mutilation (FGM)".

51. The Joint Programme reported that, in 7 of the 17 countries in which the programme operates, more than 1 in 10 girls who had undergone the practice had been cut by health professionals.<sup>49</sup> In those countries, more than 20 million girls and women have undergone female genital mutilation at the hands of a medical professional, which represents one third of all women and girls worldwide who have undergone the practice. In Egypt, health personnel were responsible for 68 per cent of cases involving girls 15 to 19 years of age. Whether medicalization is hindering the overall decline in the prevalence of the practice remains unclear.

52. In 2017, the Joint Programme, in partnership with the League of Arab States, conducted a high-level regional meeting on the role of health professionals in combating female genital mutilation. At the meeting, doctors and midwives issued two statements on the abandonment of female genital mutilation and medicalization and stressed the importance of adopting a multisectoral approach to its elimination, taking into account regional, cultural, medical, religious, legal, human rights, academic and media perspectives.

53. Despite the commitments expressed, there has been limited funding to provide high-quality, coordinated and integrated support services and care for girls and women who have been subjected to harmful practices such as female genital mutilation. As a result, many service providers, often non-governmental organizations, remain under-resourced and are unable to guarantee sustainable care and support for those who most need it.

54. However, several States reported having pledged or provided resources to address the issue during the reporting period. The United Kingdom provided almost 4 million pounds towards improving the response by social services to women and girls who had undergone or who were at risk female of genital mutilation. As part of its national development plan for the period 2014–2018, Colombia pledged both financial and human resources support for girls and women from indigenous communities who had undergone the practice and to initiate intergenerational dialogues aimed at its elimination.

#### **c. Addressing root causes**

55. Preventative measures are an important element in efforts to end female genital mutilation. Addressing prevention effectively can prove complex, owing to the difficulty of establishing new attitudes and behaviours in a social system strongly rooted in gender-based discrimination and unequal power relations. It is that respect, however, that a multidisciplinary approach can ultimately be the most successful in the eliminating the practice.

56. In order to address the root causes of female genital mutilation, preventative strategies must address attitudes and belief systems that legitimize and normalize harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation, and encompass a range of measures at the societal, institutional, community and individual levels. Those efforts must also engage a variety of actors, including national and local governments, civil society and women's organizations, families, affected communities, traditional and faith leaders, as well as men and boys, while at the same time supporting their capacity to act as agents of change. Prevention measures that have proved to be effective in addressing female genital mutilation include community mobilization, advocacy and awareness-raising, the education of women and girls, and economic empowerment.

57. In 2017, the Joint Programme, in partnership with Drexel University, developed a framework to measure change in social norms related to female genital mutilation.

<sup>49</sup> Djibouti, Egypt, Guinea, Kenya, Nigeria, the Sudan and Yemen.

The framework includes monitoring and evaluation tools, based on good practices and lessons learned, will support the design of effective interventions to influence social norms, and will measure the impact of those interventions. In addition, the framework will serve as a reference for other areas of work, in particular child, early and forced marriage and violence against children.

58. During the reporting period, several States experienced success in promoting the abandonment of female genital mutilation through community mobilization and public declarations. In 2016, with the support of the Joint Programme, 989 communities in Guinea, involving 273,800 individuals, made public declarations to abandon female genital mutilation. That marked a significant increase from the 422 community declarations made the previous year and represented 18 per cent of the country's population living in villages. Such statements made it possible to identify and protect 20,563 girls 0 to 15 years of age from female genital mutilation and 15,320 girls 12 to 17 years of age from child marriage in the targeted communities.<sup>50</sup> Further follow-up is needed, however, to determine whether the groups of girls identified above have not undergone, or are at no further risk of undergoing, the practice in the future. In 2016, the Joint Programme reported that 79 outreach activities had been conducted in 76 communities in Asyut, Egypt, reaching a total of 3,111 women and men. As a result, 1,080 families had publicly declared that they would abandon the practice of female genital mutilation.<sup>51</sup> Such declarations are important, in particular in the case of families, since they overcome a communication barrier and help the families to understand that others are also changing their attitudes and that they are not alone in the change process.<sup>52</sup>

59. Several measures reported by States leveraged the momentum created by global advocacy platforms to link the practice with other forms of violence against women and girls and to join broader initiatives to address such violations. For example, a worldwide social media campaign against female genital mutilation was launched in Ireland in 2018 to mark the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation, with the support of the #MeToo movement, reportedly reaching double the target of 1 million Twitter users across Africa, the United States, Asia and Australia to support a call to end the practice.<sup>53</sup>

60. United Nations entities also intensified their efforts to bring attention to the issue. In 2018, on the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) announced the appointment of Jaha Dukureh as its Regional Goodwill Ambassador for Africa, who will focus on ending female genital mutilation and child, early and forced marriage, including through the mobilization of youth. From 2017 to 2018, in partnership with *The Guardian* and the non-governmental organization Safe Hands for Girls, she organized a series of training sessions in Sierra Leone and Senegal for journalists and those who had performed female genital mutilation, with a view to building strong relationships among those interested in changing attitudes on female genital mutilation and reaching wider audiences through both traditional and social media platforms.

61. Owing to the respect they receive from and standing within local communities, religious leaders and faith-based organizations have a unique role in mobilizing

<sup>50</sup> UNFPA-UNICEF, "Accelerating change by the numbers: 2016 annual report of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting — accelerating change".

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> "#MeTooFGM campaign garners huge support across social media", *Irish Examiner*, 6 February 2018. Available at <https://www.irishexaminer.com/breakingnews/ireland/metooofgm-campaign-garners-huge-support-across-social-media-826655.html>.

communities towards changing attitudes and norms that perpetuate female genital mutilation. For example, during the reporting period, both the Islamic Centre of Ireland and the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Somaliland issued fatwas against female genital mutilation.<sup>54</sup>

62. The successful involvement of men and boys as part of a community-wide approach to shifting deep-rooted norms is critical for the abandonment of female genital mutilation. In Belgium, the non-governmental organization initiative Men Speak Out has engaged men in the process of ending female genital mutilation, training male peer educators from practicing communities in Belgium, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom to perform outreach activities and conduct awareness campaigns in their communities. In Kenya, the involvement of elders in campaigning against female genital mutilation has encouraged greater numbers of men from the Masaai and Embu communities to become champions of the rights of girls.

63. In 2016, also with the support of the Joint Programme, Kenya engaged schools in mobilization to end female genital mutilation. Teachers trained 3,900 children on how to report cases and access essential support services. Through that initiative, it was made clear that schools could serve as safe temporary shelter for girls escaping female genital mutilation. As a result of the training, teachers identified several girls at risk of or affected by the practice and referred those cases to the appropriate authorities.<sup>55</sup>

64. Initiatives that invest in girls' and women's empowerment, especially through education, skills development and leadership training, and that provide opportunities for employment, are key to eliminating female genital mutilation and discrimination against women and girls and to achieving gender equality. In Kenya, ending female genital mutilation is included in action plans in the education, health, culture, safety and security and legal sectors. In Nigeria, over 6,000 women and girls who have undergone the practice have received vocational training and have received "starter kits" to support them in their new jobs. Through a community empowerment programme created by the non-governmental organization Tostan International, women and girls who have undergone or are at risk of female genital mutilation have enrolled in school and availed themselves of local economic opportunities in the six countries in Africa in which the programme operates.<sup>56</sup> In 2017, 41 women in Goudiry, Senegal, who had participated in the programme were elected to represent their community at the district level.

65. Lessons learned from community empowerment programmes demonstrate that consideration must be given to individuals and communities that practice female genital mutilation, as they may not consider it to be harmful to women and girls. Many girls have undergone the practice at their homes, at the hands of a traditional practitioner or their grandmothers. It is crucial to recognize that, while harmful practices should not be condoned, a respectful, non-stigmatizing approach should be at the core of engagement with families and communities that maintain the practice. Adopting that approach will ensure more sustained progress towards complete eradication of female genital mutilation.

<sup>54</sup> "Islamic Centre of Ireland issues fatwa against FGM", RTE, 13 February 2018. Available at <https://www.rte.ie/news/2018/0212/940233-fgm/>; and Nita Bhalla, "Somaliland issues fatwa banning female genital mutilation", Thomson Reuters Foundation, 7 February 2018. Available at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-somalia-fgm-fatwa/somaliland-issues-fatwa-banning-female-genital-mutilation-idUSKBN1FR2RA>.

<sup>55</sup> UNFPA-UNICEF, "Accelerating change by the numbers: 2016 annual report of the UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting — accelerating change".

<sup>56</sup> Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mauritania and Senegal.

#### d. Data collection and research

66. The need to collect accurate, comparable and disaggregated data, and new evidence, including for reporting on target 5.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals, is critical to informing the development of legislation, policies and programmes aimed at eliminating female genital mutilation and to monitoring progress. It is particularly crucial where the practice reportedly occurs but data is either not available at all or it is missing for certain groups. Collecting and analysing data on female genital mutilation among girls 0 to 14 years of age will also allow for the comparison of trends in prevalence with data collected for girls and women 15 to 49 years of age.

67. Research has demonstrated that the use of a mixed-method approach, which combines quantitative and qualitative research methods in estimating the risk of female genital mutilation and in understanding its nature, causes and consequences results, *inter alia*, in better insight into risk and protective factors that influence the practice among various groups which, in turn, informs policies that are better tailored to addressing the practice.<sup>57</sup>

68. In Switzerland, the Federal Office of Public Health is currently undertaking a study comparing estimated prevalence rates against recorded cases of female genital mutilation in Swiss hospitals, with a view to conducting a broader needs assessment in 2019 to further inform policy and programming in this area.

69. The Joint Programme is currently partnering with the European End FGM Network on the "Building Bridges between Africa and Europe to Tackle FGM" initiative. The initiative has launched a community of practice on female genital mutilation,<sup>58</sup> which promotes the exchange of knowledge between stakeholders across Europe and Africa.

70. In 2017, the Steering Committee for Human Rights of the Council of Europe released a policy guide to good and promising practices aimed at preventing and combating female genital mutilation and forced marriage, in which it described the features of an integrated response to preventing, combating and addressing the effects of those harmful practices. The guide also provided examples of initiatives that had been taken by States members of the Council of Europe to end female genital mutilation and forced marriage.<sup>59</sup>

#### e. Coordination

71. Cooperation between all entities working to prevent female genital mutilation and provide support to women and girls who have undergone the practice is key to ensuring a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach. In Portugal, an intersectorial group consisting of State and non-governmental actors, including immigrant associations, produced a programme of action to prevent female genital mutilation, which has been incorporated into the country's National Plan to Prevent and Combat Domestic and Gender-based Violence (2014–2017).

72. In 2017, as part of phase II of the Joint Programme, UN-Women developed guidance on strengthening policy linkages between different forms of violence against women and girls, including female genital mutilation, as well as a training module on gender equality and female genital mutilation/cutting to accompany a

<sup>57</sup> European Institute for Gender Equality, "Estimation of girls at risk of female genital mutilation in the European Union: report".

<sup>58</sup> See <https://eopfgm.org>.

<sup>59</sup> Council of Europe, "Guide to good and promising practices aimed at preventing and combating female genital mutilation and forced marriage". Available at <https://rm.coe.int/female-genital-mutilation-and-forced-marriage/16807ba18f>.

manual on social norms and change.<sup>60</sup> Pilot training conducted in Kenya in 2017 for the Government, civil society and United Nations entities demonstrated that the approach was successful in achieving its objective of increasing participants' understanding of female genital mutilation as a form of violence against women and girls. As a next step, UN-Women will participate in phase III of the Joint Programme (2018–2021) which will focus on interventions to support women's and girls' empowerment as part of efforts to eradicate female genital mutilation.

## IV. Conclusions and recommendations

### A. Conclusions

73. States are addressing female genital mutilation and other harmful practices within the wider context of discrimination and violence against women and girls. In order to eradicate the practice completely, it is imperative to address its root causes, including gender discrimination and gender inequality, which are similar to those of other harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage, and other forms of violence against women and girls.

74. States have made critical progress in eliminating the practice, and that success is particularly visible in several countries in Africa. However, with population movement across borders, the practice is taking on global dimensions, where increasing numbers of girls and women, including those from refugee and migrant populations, have undergone or are at high risk of undergoing female genital mutilation.

75. Current estimates of the global prevalence of female genital mutilation do not consider data from all countries and communities where the practice is performed, thus underestimating the overall number of girls and women globally that have undergone the practice. If progress to eliminate the practice is not accelerated, any reduction in prevalence will be eclipsed by population growth in countries where it takes place.

76. Although current data on the prevalence of female genital mutilation points to areas of high prevalence, identifies populations that may be more amenable to change, and highlights influencing factors related to the practice, there are still gaps in understanding the nature, prevalence and extent of female genital mutilation, especially in countries not traditionally associated with the practice.

77. States have demonstrated a visible, high-level political commitment to ending female genital mutilation, and this has been reflected in numerous declarations, the enactment or amendment of national laws criminalizing the practice, and the integration of measures to end female genital mutilation into policy and programming on eliminating violence against women and girls. Despite those advancements, the effective enforcement of national legislation criminalizing the practice remains a challenge.

78. Evidence demonstrates the need for targeted support and responses for groups of women and girls facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, including migrant and refugee populations, rural women,

<sup>60</sup> UN-Women, *Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting and Violence against Women and Girls: Strengthening the Policy Linkages between Different Forms of Violence* (New York, 2017). Available at <http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2017/2/female-genital-mutilation-cutting-and-violence-against-women-and-girls>, and UN-Women, UNFPA and UNICEF, *Training Manual on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting* (2017). Available at <https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/mod/data/view.php?id=1&rid=5423>

indigenous women and young girls, in the design and implementation of policies and programmes addressing female genital mutilation. Results to date show that successes involving those groups are most evident at the community level, and further work is needed at the national level to amplify and replicate those efforts.

79. States have demonstrated a holistic, integrated and multisectoral approach to eliminating female genital mutilation, including by using information technology to collect and share data, and by engaging a broad range of actors as part of community mobilization efforts to change social norms. However, limited information has been provided regarding the availability of funding for policies and programmes, including for monitoring and evaluation systems. There was also limited evidence of measures being taken to evaluate the impact of interventions, in particular at the community level.

80. The trend toward increased medicalization of the practice may hinder progress in eliminating female genital mutilation. There is a clear need to strengthen the health sector's ability to reverse that trend and to manage complications of the practice, and to strengthen its role as a key change agent in preventing female genital mutilation.

## **B. Recommendations**

81. States should adopt a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach to eliminating female genital mutilation that includes the enactment and/or strengthening of legislation criminalizing the practice, the provision of high-quality, multisectoral support services and comprehensive prevention strategies, as well as coordination between Government, civil society and United Nations entities.

82. States should address the socioeconomic and root causes of the practice, paying particular attention to high-risk populations that face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, including refugee and migrant women and girls, women and girls living in rural areas, indigenous women and young girls. Those efforts should be embedded within broader efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

83. Taking into consideration population growth in countries where female genital mutilation takes place, especially among girls under the age of 15, States, as a matter of urgency, should intensify efforts to eliminate female genital mutilation, in particular in communities that have not yet been targeted by national efforts.

84. States should collect and analyse disaggregated data using standardized methods that allow for the comparison of such data across countries, in particular for women and girls who experience intersecting forms of violence and for the measurement of progress in the implementation of target 5.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals. Such data collection should be initiated in countries where female genital mutilation is reported to exist but where national data are currently unavailable. States should also collect and analyse data on female genital mutilation among girls 0 to 14 years of age to compare trends in prevalence with data collected for girls and women 15 to 49 years of age. Furthermore, States should use a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to estimate the risk of female genital mutilation to better inform laws, policies and programmes addressing the practice. States should also conduct research on individual, family and community-level factors that may influence whether the practice is performed.

85. States should enact and/or strengthen and enforce legislation prohibiting female genital mutilation, whether committed in countries of origin or destination, and hold those who perform the practice accountable. States should use consultative and participatory approaches in strengthening laws and policies and should ensure compliance.

86. States should build synergies between initiatives aimed at eliminating female genital mutilation and other forms of violence against women and girls and those aimed at achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. States should ensure that efforts aimed at the elimination of female genital mutilation and violence against women and girls are integrated into broader national action plans, cross-sector policies and programmes on gender equality.

87. To address the trend towards increased medicalization of female genital mutilation, States should ensure that health-care providers, including doctors, community health-care workers and midwives, at national and local levels, are fully aware of its harmful effects and are held accountable under law for facilitating and/or performing the practice.

88. States should adopt and continue to implement comprehensive prevention strategies, including advocacy, awareness-raising and community mobilization, with a broad range of key stakeholders, in particular, families, affected communities, schools and teachers, civil society including women's organizations, faith-based and religious institutions, traditional leaders, men and boys, women and girls, and the media, to help change existing norms, attitudes and behaviours that condone and justify gender inequality, violence against women and girls and female genital mutilation. States should adopt a non-stigmatizing approach in all prevention interventions, in particular when engaging with families and communities that maintain the practice. Members of refugee and migrant communities in particular can have a positive impact on abandonment initiatives through awareness-raising and information-sharing within communities, both in their countries of origin and in the countries in which they have settled.

89. States should collaborate with research institutions, academia, civil society and United Nations entities to monitor and evaluate the impact of ongoing measures, including public declarations and other interventions at the community level, in particular how those measures have translated into the protection of women and girls who are still at risk of undergoing female genital mutilation. States should also identify, scale up and provide further resources for measures aimed at eliminating the practice, in particular those involving new technologies, and facilitate learning and knowledge-sharing.

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**Sustainable development****Ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all****Report of the Secretary-General***Summary*

Submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/224, the present report provides an overview of the progress made towards ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all and highlights action undertaken by Member States to accelerate the achievement of that objective. The report also presents key messages from the first review of Sustainable Development Goal 7 on ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all at the high-level political forum on sustainable development held in July 2018. Future milestones, including the 2019 session of the high-level political forum, the mid-point of the United Nations Decade of Sustainable Energy for All 2014–2024 and the upcoming climate summit of the Secretary-General, to be held in 2019, present global platforms for sharing lessons and inspiring further action in support of Goal 7.

\* A/73/150.



## I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/224, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit, at its seventy-third session, a report on its implementation, including activities carried out to mark the United Nations Decade of Sustainable Energy for All 2014–2024, and decided to include in the provisional agenda of its seventy-third session, under the item entitled “Sustainable development”, the sub-item entitled “Ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all”, unless otherwise agreed.

## II. Energy in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

2. Energy is central to the achievement of both the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Energy is inextricably interlinked to many Sustainable Development Goals, including poverty eradication, food security, clean water and sanitation, health, education, prosperity, job creation and the empowerment of youth and women. Access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all is fundamental to human development. A shift towards sustainable energy solutions is also essential to the achievement of the Paris Agreement as adopted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

3. Sustainable Development Goal 7, which is intended to “Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all”, represents the first-ever universal goal on energy, with five targets pertaining to access, efficiency, renewables and means of implementation.

4. In July 2018, the high-level political forum on sustainable development undertook the first global review of Goal 7 under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, providing a first critical milestone in taking stock of progress to date on Goal 7 and its interlinkages with other Sustainable Development Goals. Many Member States undertook voluntary national reviews to assess progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including Goal 7. A multi-stakeholder technical advisory group on Goal 7 was convened by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to provide technical input for the review of Goal 7 at the high-level political forum.

5. The achievement of Goal 7 is within reach. Discussions held during the review of the Goal at the high-level political forum highlighted that advances in technologies, rapid cost declines, strategic shifts in policies, new business models and a growing number of best practices are accelerating the transformation of the energy systems in many places and bringing Goal 7 within reach. To leave no one behind, we must capitalize on this momentum to mobilize greater political will and cooperation, together with higher levels of public and private investment in a sustainable energy future.

6. Without urgent action, however, the world will fall short of the achievement of Goal 7, and consequently other Sustainable Development Goals. Approximately 1 billion people currently live without electricity, while almost 3 billion people lack access to clean-cooking solutions. Although power generation using renewable energy is expanding rapidly, little progress has been made on integrating renewable energy into end-use applications. Meanwhile, the current rate of improvement in energy efficiency is less than what is needed to meet the global target. Financial flows, including public and private investments in energy, are also falling short.

7. All stakeholders should step up and focus their efforts in support of Goal 7. Future prominent global events, including the high-level political forum, the sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the upcoming climate summit to be convened by the Secretary-General in 2019, present key platforms for sharing lessons and inspiring further action. The United Nations Decade of Sustainable Energy for All 2014–2024 should be leveraged to spur international momentum.

### **III. Progress towards ensuring access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all**

8. Emerging experiences across countries and sectors provide valuable insights for accelerating global progress towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 7. Even more encouraging than emerging global trends are the strong gains evident within specific countries in both the developed and developing worlds. Evidence is mounting that with holistic approaches, targeted policies and strengthened international cooperation, substantial gains can be made in clean energy and energy access that will improve the lives of billions of people and leave no one behind.

9. The following sections of the report draw on the report of the Secretary-General to the Economic and Social Council on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (E/2018/64), the compilation of main messages for the 2018 voluntary national reviews (E/HLPF/2018/5), policy briefs on accelerating the achievement of Goal 7 in support of the first review of Goal 7 at the high-level political forum in 2018 compiled by the technical advisory group on Goal 7, including submissions by over 50 United Nations entities and other organizations, and “Tracking SDG 7: The energy progress report 2018”, a joint report by the International Energy Agency, the International Renewable Energy Agency, the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the World Bank Group and the World Health Organization.

#### **A. Global overview**

##### **Access to electricity**

10. At present, approximately 1 billion people worldwide live without electricity. From 2000 to 2016, the proportion of the world's population with access to electricity increased from 78 per cent to 87 per cent, with the number of people living without access to electricity dipping to just around 1 billion. If current trends continue, 674 million people will still be living without access to electricity in 2030. To reach universal access by 2030, the rate of access to electricity needs to be increased by 0.8 per cent each year.

11. Hopeful signs are seen in lagging regions, with off-grid solutions starting to make a difference to complement grid electrification:

(a) Countries in the regions that are the furthest behind increased their electricity access rates during the 2014–2016 period, reaching a rate of 86.7 per cent in Central Asia and Southern Asia and 43 per cent in Sub-Saharan Africa by 2016; the absolute access-deficit in Sub-Saharan Africa, which peaked in 2015 at 595.3 million people, began to fall for the first time, by 28.5 million people in 2016;

(b) Off-grid solutions are emerging as an important driver of rural electricity access: emerging evidence suggests that off-grid solar electricity reaches about 141 million people in rural areas in the developing world, complementing grid

electrification, and that the uptake is highly concentrated in about a dozen pioneering countries;

(c) Affordability remains a key concern. Estimates suggest that, even in countries with universal access, affordability concerns affect about 30 per cent of the population; in countries working toward universal access, affordability affects 57 per cent of those who already have access.

#### **Access to clean fuels and technology**

12. At present, in 2018, approximately 3 billion people lack access to clean cooking solutions. Access to clean fuels and technologies for cooking has gradually improved, reaching 59 per cent globally in 2016, up 10 percentage points since 2000. Even with this progress, however, almost 3 billion people are still cooking with polluting fuel/stove combinations. To reach universal access to clean cooking by 2030, the annual rate of clean cooking access needs to increase to 3 per cent. If the current trajectory continues, 2.3 billion people worldwide will remain without access to clean cooking in 2030.

13. Success stories in clean cooking are rare:

(a) While parts of Asia have seen access to clean cooking outpace population growth, in Sub-Saharan Africa gains have only been marginal, with the region's overall population growing four times faster than the population that gained access to clean cooking technologies in the years between 2014 and 2016;

(b) The need for rapid deployment of clean cooking fuels and technologies has not received the political attention it deserves, despite the lower costs required to ensure clean cooking solutions for all in comparison to electrification. A combination of factors, including high entry costs for many clean cooking solutions, a lack of consumer awareness of their benefits, financing gaps for producers seeking to enter the market, slow progress in the innovation of clean cookstoves and lack of infrastructure for fuel production and distribution have kept widespread solutions to this challenge out of reach.

#### **Renewable energy**

14. Modern renewable power generation is expanding rapidly, but much greater efforts will be required to achieve Goal 7. In recent years, rapidly falling costs and policy support have made solar and wind cost competitive with conventional power generation sources in many places. Globally, such sources currently account for over 50 per cent of annual global power capacity. However, in 2015, total global renewable energy consumption increased only marginally, to 17.5 per cent, from 17.3 per cent in 2014, revealing a lack of progress in the use of renewables for transport and heating/cooling.

15. It is clear that progress in the field of renewable electricity has not yet been matched by progress in heating, cooling and transport:

(a) Significant progress has been seen in several countries: China alone accounting for nearly 30 per cent of absolute growth in renewable energy consumption globally in 2015; Brazil was the only country among the top 20 largest energy consumers to substantially exceed the global average renewable share in all end uses (electricity, transport and heating); while in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, the share of renewable energy in total final energy consumption grew by 1 percentage point annually, on average, since 2010 — more than five times the global average over the same period;

(b) Much greater efforts will be required in end-uses, such as heating/cooling and transport, which together account for 80 per cent of global energy consumption and where renewable penetration remains low, yet unexploited potential exists: one avenue would be greater adoption of district energy systems (for heating or cooling) based on biomass, geothermal or solar thermal energy — as the electricity sector decarbonizes, other energy uses can increasingly switch into electricity, including electric vehicles;

(c) Furthermore, sustaining growth of the renewable electricity sector will require additional attention to grid integration issues, including the incorporation of battery storage and smart grid technology to support the management of variable generation resources.

### **Energy efficiency**

16. The global rate of improvement in energy efficiency accelerated recently. From 2014 to 2015, global primary energy intensity, the measure of energy efficiency, fell by 2.8 per cent, the fastest decline since 2010. However, energy intensity needs to fall at an annual rate of 2.7 per cent over the 2016–2030 period, compared with the average rate of 2.2 per cent per year over the 2010–2015 period, necessitating a significant ramp-up in global policy ambition.

17. There is growing evidence of the decoupling of growth and energy use:

(a) Global gross domestic product grew nearly twice as fast as primary energy supply in the 2010–2015 period: in fact, economic growth outpaced growth in energy use in all regions, except for Western Asia, and in all income groups;

(b) Improvement in industrial energy intensity, which is the largest energy consuming sector, was particularly encouraging, with a reported reduction of 2.7 per cent per annum since 2010, however, progress was more modest elsewhere, including in transportation, residential energy consumption and power generation, transmission and distribution;

(c) Energy efficiency policies still need to be systematically adopted in many countries: building codes for residential and commercial facilities should include energy performance standards for new construction and major renovation, and the adoption of ambitious cross-sectoral integrated policy approaches that promote improvement in energy efficiency through targets or fiscal incentives, as have been applied with some success in China and in some countries in Europe, is vital.

### **Finance and investment**

18. Financing for the achievement of Goal 7 will need to double globally. Financing for Goal 7 currently stands at level of about \$500 billion per year, while \$1 to \$1.2 trillion per year will be needed until 2030 to achieve the Goal. Investment is not spread equally, with developed countries and some middle-income countries gaining access to financing, but many developing countries being left out.

19. The financing requirements for universal electrification are estimated at \$52 billion per year up to 2030, primarily for India and countries in sub-Saharan Africa. To date, nearly all investment has been directed to grid expansion, with donor financing accounting for 55 per cent of total investments in 2013. Financing for private sector off-grid solutions has started to take off, albeit from a low base, in particular for pay-as-you-go solar home systems.

20. The financing requirements for universal access to clean cooking solutions are estimated at \$4.4 billion per year up to 2030, although the current level of funding is

negligible, at only about \$240 million in 2014 according to one estimate. Private financing in this sector is very limited.

21. Renewable energy financing requirements are estimated at \$442 to \$650 billion per year until 2030. Actual renewable energy investment was \$263 billion in 2016. Developing countries accounted for 48 per cent of 2016 investment, with China being the biggest recipient. Globally, 90 per cent of renewable energy investment in 2016 was financed by private sources.

22. Energy efficiency financing requirements to achieve Goal 7 are estimated at \$560 billion per year up to 2030. Overall energy efficient investment was \$231 billion in 2016, with energy efficient measures in buildings accounting for almost 60 per cent of that total.

#### **Capacity-building**

23. Strengthened capacity-building is necessary to ensure the effective implementation of Goal 7. Across countries, a wide variety of capacity-building strategies and activities have been used to promote access to clean energy, and a wider deployment of energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies and services. These lessons need to be synthesized to provide a solid basis for scaling up capacity-building efforts, including on enabling frameworks, technology cooperation, investment measures, the transfer of technical know-how and staff training activities.

#### **Technology and innovation**

24. Energy technology innovation, which is accelerating at a historically unprecedented pace, is driven by a convergence of forces that are reshaping the electric power industry (including climate change, the need for resilient infrastructure, increasing stress on resources and decentralized supply). While driven mainly by economies of scale, innovation has helped enable dramatic reductions in the costs of key renewable energy technologies. For example, the cost of solar photovoltaic modules dropped by over 80 per cent over the past seven years, and the global weighted average levelized cost of electricity fell by 73 per cent, to \$0.10/kWh, in 2017. Significant further innovation is needed, however, in all aspects of the energy system if we are to markedly accelerate the energy transition, achieve the SDG 7 targets and meet the challenges set out in the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

#### **Data and monitoring**

25. Sustained efforts are needed to improve data quality and availability, in particular improvement in the scope and precision of household survey questionnaires to more accurately reflect the nature and quality of service in the provision of electricity and clean cooking. Current indicators do not capture the affordability and reliability dimensions emphasized in Goal 7. Moreover, the off-grid solar revolution is making it increasingly challenging to accurately reflect trends in rural electrification. It is equally important to strengthen statistical capacity to produce accurate energy balances, particularly in the developing countries, where many challenges remain in capturing, for instance, the traditional uses of biomass. There is still relatively little information on the energy efficiency of major consuming sectors outside the major economies, which is critical to inform policy interventions.

## B. Regional overview

### Africa

26. Existing policies and commitments alone are unlikely to enable most of the countries in Africa to achieve Goal 7. Roughly the same number of people are likely to be without access to electricity in 2030 as in 2016 (590 million), while the number of people without access to efficient and clean cooking will reach 900 million by 2030.

27. Renewable electricity capacity exceeded 38 GW in 2016 (about 23 per cent of the total), driven mainly by developments in wind, solar photovoltaic, geothermal and large-scale hydropower. Energy intensity remains high. To ensure the attainment of Goal 7 in Africa by 2030, an investment of approximately \$34.2 billion per year will be needed.

28. Priority actions for Africa should include: putting in place coherent policies and enabling environments to mobilize investment; addressing data gaps and statistical reliability; developing in-country human and institutional capacities; integrating climate resilience into the planning and implementation of energy infrastructure and investments; promoting the sharing of good practices and experiences; systematically prioritizing energy efficiency across all sectors; promoting local engagements across the full renewable energy value chain; and accelerating efforts to encourage innovation, research and development at the regional level.

### Arab region

29. Access to electricity is close to universal in cities across the Arab region, but the rate remains at approximately 80 per cent in rural areas; as reported in 2014, a total of around 36 million people were without access to electricity. The share of the region's population using clean cooking fuels and technologies has risen continuously since the early part of the century, and stood at 88 per cent in 2014 overall, ranging from close to 100 per cent access in the States members of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the countries in the Mashreq, to less than 40 per cent in the least developed countries of the region.

30. The region has a huge potential for renewable energy, and countries such as Morocco, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are aggressively developing modern renewable energy generation, fuelled by rapid cost reductions and technological advancements. However, renewable energy, reported at 4 per cent of total final energy consumption in 2014, including biomass, still plays a marginal role in most Arab countries. No reduction in energy intensity has been observed in the region over the past 25 years, while energy consumption has more than doubled since 1990.

31. Priority actions in the region should include: implementing policies and institutional frameworks to boost renewable energy and energy efficiency measures and practices; building institutional capacity, transparency and accountability; monitoring and data collection systems; promoting information-sharing; strengthening communication between Governments, financial institutions and the public and private sectors; enforcing proactive and integrated policies for sustainable natural resources management; promoting a more rational use of the region's fossil fuel resources; enhancing interregional Arab cooperation and trade; and developing local manufacturing of renewable energy technologies components.

### Asia and the Pacific

32. The countries of Asia and the Pacific are on track to reach nearly universal access to electricity by 2030, although there are still over 420 million people without access to electricity, almost 10 per cent of the region's population. Some countries, mainly Pacific islands, still have acutely low access rates. However, the region is far from being on track to achieve universal clean cooking access by 2030: almost 2.1 billion people, nearly half the population of the region, rely on polluting and unhealthy cooking fuels and technology.

33. The share of renewable energy reached 18.3 per cent of the region's total final energy consumption in 2014, up from a low of 17.9 per cent in 2011. Modern renewables comprised 6.8 per cent of total final energy consumption in 2014, up from 6.2 per cent in 2012. The region has demonstrated a long-term steep decline in energy intensity by over 30 per cent in the years from 1990 to 2014.

34. Priority actions should include maintaining the existing momentum, the commitment of Governments to universal electricity access, urgently establishing national and regional targets for clean cooking fuels and technologies, putting in place supportive policies and initiatives to promote renewable energy and tightening energy efficiency regulations.

### Latin America and the Caribbean

35. The number of people without access to electricity in Latin America and the Caribbean fell from 44 million in 2000 to 18 million in 2014. If current growth rates are maintained, universal electricity access can be achieved by 2030. In urban areas, coverage in 2014 was 99 per cent while in rural areas it reached over 88 per cent of the population. The countries with the largest deficits included Bolivia (Plurinational State of), Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras and Nicaragua.

36. Access to modern energy sources for cooking has been improving, and was up to 86.5 per cent in 2014, although over 84 million people still lacked access as of 2014. Annual rates of expansion have declined in recent years, and at current rates of progress (roughly 0.5 per cent per year), Goal 7 will be unachievable.

37. The region has the lowest energy intensity in the world. However, it also has the lowest annual rates of improvement (about 0.5 per cent per year on average between 1990 and 2010). At the pace of progress (which dropped to 0.3 per cent between 2012 and 2014) it will be impossible to double the rate of improvement in energy efficiency by 2030. In 2014, renewable energy sources represented 27.2 per cent of total final energy consumption and modern renewable energies represented 22.9 per cent of total final energy consumption.

38. Priority actions should include: developing suitable institutional and regulatory frameworks for attracting investment; implementing policies that encourage the development of renewable energies, including wind and solar; intensifying national programmes to promote the use of efficient and clean wood-burning stoves; strengthening the institutional and regulatory frameworks for energy efficiency; developing national energy efficiency plans; and promoting greater rationalization of the transport sector.

### Economic Commission for Europe

39. Attainment of Goal 7 is falling short in the States members of the Economic Commission for Europe. Specific circumstances in parts of the region have led to the inefficient use of energy, power cuts, increasing energy costs and unsustainable and

unaffordable heating in winter. Some countries export large quantities of fossil fuels and have some of the world's highest levels of energy intensity.

40. The region has achieved 100 per cent access to electrical power networks and 98 per cent access to clean cooking fuels, although there are significant quality and affordability challenges. The rate of progress in improving energy intensity in the region has been around -2 per cent per annum since 2012, while a rate of -2.6 per cent is required to meet the 2030 Goal. Annual renewable energy investment in the region needs to more than double to achieve Goal 7.

41. Priority actions should include: reflecting the full costs of energy production and use in energy prices; rationalizing the use of energy subsidies to remove market distortions while protecting vulnerable groups; reducing market barriers to sustainable energy technology; exploring ways to accelerate energy efficiency uptake; developing sustainable frameworks to promote investment in renewable energy; improving understanding of the interplay between efficient distribution networks, flexible fossil fuel plants and variable renewables; reducing the carbon intensity of the energy sector; establishing energy efficiency standards in buildings; adopting the United Nations Framework Classification for Resources as a tool for sustainable resource management; and promoting the sharing of knowledge and information on technology, market design, transition processes and efficient pathways.

#### **Least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States**

42. Least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States together consist of 91 countries with a total population of about 1.1 billion people. Access to energy in these vulnerable countries remains a major challenge. In 2016, the proportion of the population in least developed countries with access to electricity was 44.8 per cent; in landlocked developing countries it was 53.1 per cent; and in small island developing States it was 76.3 per cent.

43. Across the least developed countries, the share of traditional and modern renewables in total final energy consumption was 67.8 per cent in 2015, while it was 53 per cent in landlocked developing countries. In both cases the use of traditional biomass remained the largest source of renewable energy. Improving energy efficiency is also a priority for all vulnerable countries, and in most of them there has only been a small improvement in the overall situation. One crucial factor in increasing energy efficiency is the improvement of transmission and distribution systems.

44. Vulnerable countries often pay a considerably higher price for electricity. The average cost of electricity in capital cities of least developed countries is reported at \$22.4¢/kWh, compared to the cost in developed countries, for example the United States of America, where the commercial rate in 2016 was reported at 10.08¢/kWh. The cost of electricity in least developed countries ranges from \$5.7¢/kWh (Bhutan) to \$96¢/kWh (Solomon Islands). Countries that are highly dependent on imported fossil fuels tend to have very high rates.

45. Priority actions should include: creating enabling environments to catalyse private sector investment; increasing developing assistance allocated to sustainable energy in least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States; supporting project preparation to fast track progress; enhancing integration of regional/cross-border energy infrastructure and institutions to ensure economies of scale; creating cross-sectoral linkages between sustainable energy and other development priorities; and ensuring that the national energy policies take into consideration the energy demand profile of the poorest people, including the promotion of productive uses of energy.

### C. Member States

46. For the high-level political forum on sustainable development, held in July 2018, 46 countries undertook voluntary national reviews of their progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The national reviews aimed at facilitating the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. Based on the reviews submitted to the high-level forum, and for illustrative purposes only, some examples of country-level experiences related to Goal 7 are highlighted below.

#### Armenia

47. In Armenia, a strong regulatory and institutional framework has been developed to boost the production of renewable energy and enhance energy efficiency in industry, in rural and urban communities and in households. In this context, effective Government programmes and economic measures were introduced to ensure universal access to reliable electricity for the entire population, including in rural and urban areas. The share of renewable energy in the total final energy consumption of the country has been increasing, reaching 14.1 per cent in 2016 — this growth is largely the result of growth in the fields of hydro power and solar power.

#### Australia

48. The Australian Government is committed to ensuring access to affordable, reliable power, while meeting its commitments under the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Australia's electricity sector is being transformed by the rapid growth in renewable energy, shifting consumer demand and the need to deliver affordable, reliable and secure supply while meeting the country's emissions reduction commitments. Australia has made a considerable investment in the development of clean energy technology and projects to improve energy efficiency in all areas, including agriculture, educational institutions, housing, infrastructure and manufacturing.

#### Burkina Faso

49. The Government of Burkina Faso intends to meet 100 per cent of national electricity needs in urban areas and 40 per cent in rural areas with reliable and affordable electricity by 2025. Significant efforts are under way to achieve this, including the inauguration of the largest solar power plant in West Africa in 2017. The 33 MW power plant, located in Zagtoui, has 129,600 solar panels over a surface of 60 hectares.

#### Bangladesh

50. Bangladesh has made considerable progress in providing electricity access in recent years. The major sources of renewable energy in Bangladesh are solar and wind energy. The innovative financing model for home solar systems has led to rapid expansion of their use and over 4.5 million such systems have been installed. As a result, more than 100,000 jobs have been generated. The energy output from solar increased from 51 GWh in 2010 to 212 GWh in 2014.

#### Canada

51. Thanks to an abundance of hydro power and advanced nuclear technology, the electrical supply in Canada is among the least expensive and cleanest in the world. In 2015, Canadian households spent an average of \$4,198 on energy. Fully 80 per cent

of electricity comes from non-emitting sources, which has enabled Canada to make significant progress towards the achievement of Goal 7. Canada is making generational investments in clean energy and energy efficiency, and is introducing policies that will accelerate the transition to renewable sources of energy. In addition, Canada has addressed the interlinkages between energy and gender equality through a series of initiatives that could influence not only the gender balance within the energy sector, but also increase employment opportunities and financial independence for women around the world, including through the "Clean Energy Education and Empowerment" initiative and the "Equal by30" campaign.

### **Egypt**

52. In Egypt the energy sector has undergone a substantial upgrade, improving its capacity to produce, transport and distribute electricity. Egypt has increased its capacity to produce electricity by at least 15 gigawatts of electricity by using advanced, sustainable and efficient technologies. The national energy strategy is aimed at increasing the share of renewable energy to 42 per cent by 2035. The Government has also enacted major reforms in the legal framework of its electricity sector, opening the door for increased participation of the private sector and the effective regulatory role of the State. Efforts to increase production, efficiency and sustainability in the energy sector are consistent with Egypt's vision to become the energy hub of the Eastern Mediterranean.

### **Jamaica**

53. Energy security and efficiency are critical to Jamaica's sustainable transformation to developed country status. Notwithstanding the downward trend seen over the past decade, Jamaica still has one of the highest energy intensities in the Latin America and Caribbean region, and, like many other small island developing States, is heavily reliant on imported fossil fuels. Policy, legislative and operational reforms, anchored in "Vision 2030 Jamaica" and the national energy policy 2009–2030, are under way to address the main challenges in the sector. Since the adoption of the national energy policy, there have been tangible gains with respect to energy security, efficiency and fuel diversification, including increased use of cleaner and renewable sources of energy. Jamaica has also engaged in the expansion of energy-related infrastructure and the upgrade of technology to modernize and diversify its energy options.

### **Lithuania**

54. Innovative solutions and smart energy are the basis of Lithuania's modern and sustainable economy. The implementation of the national energy independence strategy strengthens the country's energy security and competitiveness and promotes energy prosumerism. Lithuania has built a liquefied natural gas terminal and launched Lithuanian-Swedish and Lithuanian-Polish inter-system power links. The share of renewable energy accounts for almost 26 per cent of gross final energy consumption, and heat from renewable energy sources exceeds 46 per cent of the gross.

### **Niger**

55. Regarding access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all, it should be noted that only 3.7 per cent of the population of the Niger used mostly clean fuels and technologies in 2015. To rectify this situation and to achieve Goal 7, the Niger is continuing to implement a national action plan for renewable energies, which will eventually reduce the use of biomass as a source of energy significantly.

## Paraguay

56. Paraguay, the world's largest producer, per capita, and largest exporter of clean renewable electricity, welcomed the Sustainable Water and Energy Solutions partnership concluded between the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Itaipu Binacional international hydropower association to promote the sustainability of water and energy in line with Sustainable Development Goals 6 and 7. Under the partnership, a model office was established on the Paraguayan side of the Itaipu dam with the aim of creating a global sustainability network to provide a platform to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

## Qatar

57. Qatar has worked to ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all. To that end, it has begun developing alternative energy sources, including the Umm al-Houl power plant project and the Siraj Solar Energy project. The country is also promoting the efficient utilization of energy and gas through its national committee on renewable energy. In that connection, the Qatar District Cooling Company has implemented a plan to use treated wastewater instead of potable water to operate its cooling plants. Qatar has also continued to implement its energy efficiency programme. Since its inception in 2012 and up to the end of 2016, the programme has reduced per capita consumption of electricity by 18 per cent and consumption of water by about 20 per cent.

## Romania

58. Romania's low dependency on imported energy resources, combined with structural changes in the economy, is leading to the downsizing and relative decline of energy-intensive industries, helping the country to avoid major disruptions during Europe's recurring energy crises. Romania has a geographical location that favours wind, solar and water energy, as well as mineral resources, and it has significant untapped potential as a result of savings gained through sustainable development and from the circular economy. In the past 15 years, the country has managed to achieve a renewable energy share in energy production of just over 24 per cent, a target that has been settled for the year 2020, mainly with the help of solar panels and wind power, supplemented by the use of cogeneration of electricity and other energy sources.

## Saudi Arabia

59. The energy sector has played a crucial role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals in Saudi Arabia. Under the national transformation programme, the country has set a target to produce 3.45 GW of renewable energy by 2020, thus raising the share of renewable energy to 4 per cent of total energy produced. In this regard, the Vision 2030 initiative sets a target of 9.5 GW for the production of renewable energy by 2030, which is equivalent to 10 per cent of the total energy produced nationwide. The national energy efficiency programme is designed to increase efficiency in three main sectors that together account for over 90 per cent of national energy consumption: buildings; industry; and land transportation. Recently, by bringing the minimum energy efficiency ratio of small capacity air conditioners into line with international specifications, the country achieved an energy savings of 37 per cent.

## Sri Lanka

60. Sri Lanka has over 98 per cent coverage of domestic electricity supply, and renewable sources account for 53 per cent of the total primary energy supply.

However, as rising dependency on imports and the cost of energy are presenting challenges, the Government is exploring renewable energy options, demand side management and regulation of the sector.

### **Togo**

61. The overall rate of access to electricity in Togo rose from 22.5 per cent in 2008 to 35.6 per cent in 2016, and the rural electrification rate increased from 3 per cent in 2008 to 6.3 per cent in 2016. With regard to access to sustainable energy for the rural and landlocked populations, four solar photovoltaic solar power plants with a cumulative total capacity of 600 kW have been installed, as well as 10,000 solar streetlights in the five regions of the country. Launched in June 2018, Togo's new electrification strategy seeks to shift the electrification paradigm. In adopting this strategy, Togo has made a firm commitment to the achievement of sustainable energy transition and access to electrical power for the entire population by 2030.

### **United Arab Emirates**

62. The Government of the United Arab Emirates has invested significantly in sustainable energy and is increasingly considered a major global hub for renewables through its pioneering initiatives and projects on green technologies. In January 2017, the national energy strategy for 2050 was unveiled as the first unified energy strategy for the country. The strategy, which is a joint effort of all energy-related authorities and executive councils in the United Arab Emirates and is under the supervision of the federal government, aims to increase the contribution of clean energy in the total energy mix to 50 per cent resulting in savings of \$190 billion by 2050. The plan will be implemented in three phases: (a) accelerate the move to efficient energy consumption, ensure stable sources of energy and diversify energy sources; (b) find new energy-efficient solutions for transportation; and (c) focus on research and development and enhance innovation and creativity in the supply of sustainable energy.

### **Uruguay**

63. Uruguay has been successful in the area of energy and is a world leader in the use of renewable sources. Its success has been underpinned by a long-term State policy and a solid regulatory and institutional framework. Uruguay has one of the highest rates of electricity coverage in Latin America, with access to electricity for 99.7 per cent of the country's population.

### **Viet Nam**

64. Viet Nam has introduced a number of significant policies, including the adoption of a law on electricity, with the goal of providing sustainable electricity to meet the socioeconomic needs of the population and the country at large. In this regard, the eighth national electricity plan is aimed at ensuring that most rural households have access to electricity by 2020. Viet Nam's renewable energy development strategy to 2030, in conjunction with a Vision to 2050 initiative, sets specific targets relating to the ratio of renewable energy within the country's energy structure, in particular the achievement of the generation of 7 per cent of electricity from renewable energy by 2020 and 10 per cent by 2030. Viet Nam has also enacted a law on the economic and efficient use of energy and national energy development until 2020, as well as a Vision to 2050 initiative, to promote more efficient use of energy in production and consumption. The strategy of cleaner production in the industry sector by 2020 has also led to cleaner production practices by industry, including practices in energy, material and fuel consumption that are 5 to 8 per cent

cleaner. Overall, Viet Nam's current energy policies largely reflect key aspects of Goal 7.

#### **D. Interlinkages between energy and other Sustainable Development Goals**

65. Advancement in Goal 7 has the potential to spur progress on all of the Sustainable Development Goals, including the Goals on poverty eradication, gender equality, mitigation of and adaptation to climate change, food security, health, education, sustainable cities and communities, clean water and sanitation, jobs, innovation, transport and refugees and other situations of displacement. To realize this opportunity, closer cross-sectoral cooperation is needed at all levels between actors and decision makers, as well as measures to address the following important areas of sustainable development practice:

(a) Access to clean fuels and technologies has the potential to save millions of lives each year: household air pollution resulting from the inefficient use of clean fuels and technologies for cooking is alone responsible for some 4 million deaths annually;

(b) Effective action towards a low-carbon and climate-resilient energy system is essential for achieving the objectives of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: the energy sector accounts for roughly two-thirds of all anthropogenic greenhouse-gas emissions;

(c) Globally over 291 million children go to primary schools without any electricity: Sub-Saharan Africa has the lowest rate, with 35 per cent, followed by South Asia with 48 per cent;

(d) The clean energy transition generates jobs: the renewable energy sector worldwide employed 9.8 million people worldwide in 2016, and energy efficiency and renewable energy are creating more jobs than the fossil fuel industry, enabling net employment gains;

(e) Energy and water are closely interlinked and interdependent: if Governments and industries continue with business as usual, it will be impossible to meet the simultaneous huge increases in water and energy demands in the next decades - the inextricable linkages between these two critical resources requires a suitably integrated approach;

(f) Cities globally consume up to 75 per cent of energy, and are responsible for 70 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions: promoting sustainable cities requires coordinated multisectoral investments and integrated policies;

(g) Access to clean fuel and electricity is essential to meet the needs of the over 134 million people in need of humanitarian assistance due to conflict, natural disasters, and other complex global challenges: a group of United Nations entities and other stakeholders has developed a global plan of action for sustainable energy solutions in situations of displacement to identify concrete actions for accelerated progress towards the vision of safe access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy services for all displaced people by 2030.

66. Greater access to energy services can improve women's health and well-being, free up their time and enable their economic empowerment. Women and children without clean cooking access spend an average of 1.4 hours a day collecting fuel. In order to enhance the effectiveness of actions under all of the Sustainable Development Goals, there is the need to ensure that all elements of energy planning and

polymaking factor into gender dimensions and actively advance women's leadership at all levels.

67. The energy sector accounts for roughly two-thirds of all anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions. Effective action towards a low-carbon and climate-resilient energy system is essential for the achievement of the objectives of the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda. Advances in renewable energy and energy efficiency must be accelerated to address climate change.

#### **IV. Review of Sustainable Development Goal 7 at the high-level political forum on sustainable development in 2018**

68. The high-level political forum on sustainable development is the central platform for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. In 2018, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council, with the theme of "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies," the high-level forum undertook the first global review of Sustainable Development Goal 7, as well as Goals 6, 11, 12 and 15.

69. The review of Goal 7 at the high-level political forum was informed, inter alia, by:

- (a) Voluntary national reviews submitted by 47 Governments sharing experiences and best practices for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, including Goal 7;

- (b) Outcomes of the Regional Forums on Sustainable Development;

- (c) Report of the Secretary-General on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (E/2018/64);

- (d) Policy briefs on accelerating the achievement of Goal 7 in support of the first review of Goal 7 at the high-level political forum in 2018, including the proposed global agenda for accelerated action on Sustainable Development Goal 7, compiled by the multi-stakeholder technical advisory group on Goal 7, including submissions by over 50 United Nations entities and other organizations;

- (e) Outcomes of the global meeting on Goal 7, serving as a multi-stakeholder expert-level preparatory meeting in support of the review of Goal 7 at the high-level political forum, convened by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and the Ministry of Energy of the Government of Thailand, held in Bangkok from 21 to 23 February 2018;

- (f) "Tracking SDG 7: The energy progress report 2018", a joint report prepared by the International Energy Agency, the International Renewable Energy Agency, the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the World Bank Group and the World Health Organization.

- (g) Outcomes of multi-stakeholder gatherings related to energy, including the Vienna Energy Forum 2018, the Sustainable Energy for All Forum, the European Development Days and the workshop on Goal 7 organized by the United Nations Environment Programme.

70. The ministerial declaration of the 2018 high-level political forum, which stressed that while progress had been made on some of the Goals and targets, it had not been at the pace required to achieve the 2030 Agenda, and had been uneven across countries and regions, called urgently for accelerating progress toward all targets.

71. In the ministerial declaration, participants noted with concern the need to speed up progress towards the achievement of Goal 7, and called upon Governments and all stakeholders to increase and scale up action, including to: make clean cooking solutions a priority; close the electricity access gap by harnessing the potential of decentralized renewable energy solutions; accelerate the transition towards renewable energy; accelerate the pace of progress in the area of energy efficiency across all sectors of the economy; rationalize inefficient fossil fuel subsidies, taking into account the specific needs and conditions of developing countries; scale-up capacity-building, research and development; and promote innovation and investments.

72. During the review of Goal 7 at the high-level political forum, some stakeholders underscored the need for stepping up efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda and noted, inter alia, that there was a need for regular intergovernmental dialogues on energy and that the proposed global agenda for accelerated action towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 7 presented by the multi-stakeholder technical advisory group, on Goal 7 could provide a useful multi-stakeholder action framework to build on in this regard.

## **V. United Nations Decade of Sustainable Energy for All 2014–2024: global plan of action for the Decade**

73. In 2012, the General Assembly unanimously approved resolution 67/215, by which it declared the Decade of Sustainable Energy for All 2014–2024, underscoring the importance of energy issues for sustainable development. The General Assembly called for the rapid implementation of the strategic objectives of the global plan of action for the Decade, most recently in its resolution 72/224.

74. Building on the achievements to date, the Decade should play a significant role in bringing together all stakeholders to respond to the call for accelerated action towards the achievement of Goal 7, as declared at the 2018 high-level political forum.

75. In order to ensure the strategic alignment of the global plan of action for the Decade with the 2030 Agenda, including by building on technical inputs such as the proposed global agenda for accelerated action towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 7 and the outcomes of the review of Goal 7 at the 2018 high-level political forum, the strategic objectives of the global plan of action for the Decade are further elaborated below, to serve as a framework for multi-stakeholder action:

### **(a) Advancing the implementation of Goal 7:**

(i) Make clean-cooking solutions a top political priority, and put in place specific policies, cross-sectoral plans and public investments, supported by renewed game-changing multi-stakeholder partnerships;

(ii) Close the electricity access gap by establishing detailed plans of action nationally, regionally and globally to “leave no one behind”, backed by determined leadership, targeted policies and regulations, multi-stakeholder partnerships, bottom-up actions and increased investment in both on- and off-grid solutions: cross-border grid connections, on-grid renewable energy solutions and decentralized options will all be required to respond to the differing needs of countries and regions;

(iii) Accelerate the pace of transition towards renewable energy, especially in end-use sectors such as transport, construction and industry, to combat climate change and realize substantial economic, health and environmental benefits;

- (iv) Harness the potential of decentralized renewable energy solutions, which are key to universal energy access and empowerment of people, companies and communities;
- (v) Scale up investments in energy efficiency across all sectors of the economy, supported by well-designed, evidence-based policies, as well as by regional, national and local action plans;
- (vi) Double the financing for Sustainable Development Goal 7 globally, from the current annual level of about \$500 billion to \$1 to \$1.2 trillion per year until 2030;
- (vii) Scale up capacity-building and education, with renewed, cross-sectoral approaches, to develop human and institutional capacities and required skills in support of universal energy access and energy sector transformation;
- (viii) Enhance innovation systems, including research, development, deployment and diffusion in the design and operation of the energy system, especially in the end-use sectors of transport, industry and construction;
- (ix) Invest in data collection systems and data analysis to build institutional capacities at the national level and ensure effective monitoring of the Goal 7 targets, including, as needed, through improved, policy-relevant indicators;
- (b) Strengthening interlinkages between Goal 7 and the other Sustainable Development Goals:
  - (i) Harness the potential of cross-sectoral interlinkages to maximize multiple benefits and synergies by promoting energy as an enabler for all of the Sustainable Development Goals: special attention should be given to the interlinkages between energy and poverty eradication, reduction of inequalities, gender equality, jobs, climate change, food security, health, education, clean water and sanitation, sustainable cities and communities, innovation, transport, industrialization, peace and security and refugees and people in other situations of displacement;
  - (ii) A unified approach is required to simultaneously achieve Goal 7 and meet the goals of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change: the decarbonization of the world's energy systems and the attainment of the targets of Goal 7, including ensuring universal access to modern energy by 2030, are mutually reinforcing and must be advanced at the same time;
  - (iii) Integrate gender equality and women's empowerment into all energy actions to advance the Sustainable Development Goals;
  - (iv) Promote sustainable and low-carbon cities with reliable and affordable public transportation systems, energy-efficient built environments and significant shares of their energy needs met by cleaner energy sources;
- (c) Addressing regional priorities:
  - (i) Strengthen cooperation at the regional level to promote innovation and facilitate financing; support regional cross-border power grid connectivity to enhance energy security; advance economic integration and sustainable development; and share best practices that are responsive to regional needs with regard to Goal 7 and its interlinkages with the other Sustainable Development Goals;
  - (ii) Prioritize ending energy poverty in the most vulnerable countries: investments (by all stakeholders) in sustainable energy in those countries will have a significant positive impact across different Sustainable Development

Goals and demonstrate the true spirit of leaving no one behind — the most vulnerable countries, in particular those in Africa, as well as the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States, deserve special attention, as do countries in conflict or post-conflict situations;

(d) Accelerating transformation towards a sustainable, inclusive and equitable energy future:

(i) Promote transformational investments in developing sustainable, inclusive and equitable energy systems, including by strengthening energy systems through cross-border grid connections and fully incorporating decentralized renewable energy solutions in energy planning, while recognizing that energy transition will take different paths in different parts of the world: promoting such a transformation will require multiple and multifaceted actions by all actors, including a concerted, multilateral approach that paves the way for advancing universal energy access through decentralized solutions, while at the same time advancing the Paris Agreement;

(ii) Transform human behaviour from energy-intensive lifestyles to more sustainable patterns, promoting technological and institutional changes that result in adequate food, clean water, better education and reduction of poverty and gender inequalities, together with reductions in air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions;

(iii) Strengthen decision-making processes by reinforcing improvements in energy data collection, indicators and monitoring efforts, adopting, as needed, a broader range of forward-looking indicators on energy for sustainable development, including interlinkages indicators (for example, indicators linking energy and health and energy and jobs);

(iv) Harness the power of all stakeholders to promote change through advocacy, capacity-building, mobilization and collaborative action, including businesses, civil society, women and youth;

(v) Leverage existing initiatives, such as “Greening the Blue”, to promote renewable energy, energy efficiency and related sustainable practices in all United Nations facilities and operations by establishing practical implementation targets and timelines.

76. Turning these strategic objectives into action will require increased international cooperation among all multi-stakeholders on specific, strategic, bold and time-bound plans of action and partnerships, including through the facilitation of efforts by the Secretariat, including the regional commissions, in coordination with the United Nations development system, international organizations, multilateral development banks, businesses, civil society and other stakeholders. UN-Energy should increase coherence and coordination across the United Nations system as well as its collaboration with multi-stakeholders. Support for the multi-stakeholder technical advisory group on Goal 7 should continue to be strengthened and its work should be leveraged to assist such efforts. The midpoint of the United Nations Decade of Sustainable Energy for All 2014–2024, in 2019, could prove to be a useful platform for highlighting progress in the achievement of Goal 7. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs supports the Secretary-General in coordinating the activities of the Decade, facilitates UN-Energy as its secretariat and convenes the multi-stakeholder technical advisory group on Goal 7.

## VI. Conclusion

77. In order to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including Sustainable Development Goal 7, all stakeholders need to step up and scale up their action. Future global milestones, such as the high-level political forum in 2019, under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly during its seventy-fourth session, the sessions of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention of Climate Change and the climate change summit to be convened by the Secretary-General in 2019, present key opportunities. The United Nations Decade of Sustainable Energy for All 2014–2024 should also be leveraged to facilitate the rapid implementation of the strategic objectives as described in this report. These actions can help build sustainable and resilient societies, reaching the furthest behind and ensuring that no one is left behind.